LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND EXPECTATIONS PRIOR TO AND DURING JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN: PARENTS' AND TEACHERS'

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Abstract

This study investigated parents' and teachers' views of the completion and importance of social and cognitive early learning activities and learning outcomes by the end of JK. A mixed methods approach, including questionnaires and interviews, was incorporated. Findings demonstrated statistical differences between parents and teachers about early learning activities and expectations for children by the end of JK. Specifically, parents and teachers differed about early learning activities involving computer and workbook use, the development of self-regulation, socialization, reading books, and encouraging independence. Both parents and teachers valued activities that promoted socialization, reading, and independence; however, parents believed socialization, and teachers believed reading and independence to be of greater importance. Parents and teachers also differed about JK learning outcomes involving academic skills, independence, and self-regulation with parents and teachers valuing social skill development as being important. Recommendations to improve the transition to JK and learning outcomes for JK are shared.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Importance of Parental Involvement

Parents are known to be a child's first educator in teaching certain aptitudes as well as providing essential information and ideas including numeracy and simple literacy skills ((Joe & Davis, 2009; Ming & Powell, 2010; Zill, 1999). When a child first enters school, success is predicted by how involved parents are in a child's schooling (Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Graves & Wright Brown, 2011; Rogers, 2011). However, parent involvement is not just connected to involvement in the school community, but also the amount and type of involvement a parent completes at home with their child. The most important and influential idea of parent involvement is that it needs to begin as soon as possible so the impact on a child's school success will be more effective (Edwards, McMillon, & Turner, 2010). Parents have a strong influence on how well their children do academically at school (Joe & Davis, 2009), and it is imperative that parents are aware of the implications that they can have on their child's academic success. Lau, Li, and Rao (2011) found that parental involvement in general improves a child's school readiness; however, the amount of time a parent dedicates to the child's learning at home has a much stronger impact on how prepared the child is for school. The stronger the involvement a parent has regarding their child's learning, the more favourable the effects on the child's accomplishments (Edwards et al., 2010).

However, oftentimes, parents are not able to provide the supports required for their children to be successful in the transition to school. Parents may work long hours to make sure that they are providing the basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and utilities; thus parents may not have the time to provide adequate support at home to develop school-related skills. Furthermore, some parents may also speak English as a second language and may not understand what skills are required of children prior to entering Kindergarten. On the other hand, these parents may be

providing activities for their children that are helpful, just not in the context that schools have traditionally expected, for example storytelling to the child in their native language (e.g. Anderson, Anderson, Lynch, & Shapiro, 2003; Wasik & Van Horn, 2012).

In order for children to achieve success at Kindergarten entry and later schooling, parents should aim to provide opportunities to introduce school activities at home and supplement what is being completed at school. Furthermore, schools must also take an active role in this process. Teachers should be aware of the diverse backgrounds and home practices of children they teach and try to build on these strategies in the classroom in order to assume a smooth school transition for children.

Transitioning to School

Once schooling begins, a Kindergarten teacher begins the process of formal learning for a child. Some children, who arrive at Kindergarten, have skills that prepare them for a successful transition, whereas other children have more difficulty in transitioning to Kindergarten. Some parents complete many early learning activities at home to help prepare their child for the transition to school, for example, they teach the alphabet and read books; however, scholars have noted that it is not just academic skills that are essential for school readiness and a successful school transition (Gill, Winters, & Friedman, 2006). Other skills are also important for Kindergarten children, such as being self-reliant (Achhpal, Goldman, & Rohner, 2007; Chan, 2011; Grace & Brandt, 2006), being self-directed (Achhpal, et al., 2007; Barbarin et al., 2008; King & Boardman, 2006), and having gross and fine motor skills (Achhpal, et al., 2007; Barbarin, et al., 2008; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Lee, 2006; Zhang, Sun, & Gai, 2008). These skills are just as important as academic skills and include knowing shapes, letters and numbers (Barbarin et al., 2008; Chan, 2011; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Lara-Cinisomo, Sidle Fuligni, Ritchie, Howes, & Karoly, 2008). It is

apparent that numerous other skills are essential for children to acquire during or prior to entry into formal schooling; however, research varies in what teachers and parents believe is most important. For example, some parents believe that academic skills are most important (e.g. Barbarin et al., 2008; Grace & Brandt, 2006), while some teachers value social skills (e.g. Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008), independence skills (e.g. Chan, 2011; King & Boardman, 2009), or physical skills most (e.g. Zhang et al., 2008).

Factors Affecting Expectations for Kindergarten

Initial entry into Kindergarten and compulsory schooling differs significantly depending on the country being studied. Typically, formal schooling commences at the age of five or six. The context of this research focuses on the province of Ontario in Canada where entry into formal schooling begins at the age of 4, in a program called Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). This program includes Junior Kindergarten (JK) students, who are 4-years of age, and Senior Kindergarten (SK) who are 5-years of age. Many countries prefer to focus their curriculum and teaching methods on academic skills in Kindergarten (Hegde & Cassidy, 2009), whereas others consider self-regulation (i.e., when children are able to remain calm and control their feelings and impulses in an acceptable way), social development, and play as essential components of their programming (Ministry of Education, 2010). Most recently in Ontario, it seems that the latter three skills are deemed more important by government officials and educators as evidenced by an interweaving of developing academic, cognitive, and independence skills amongst a play-based learning environment (Ministry of Education, 2010). This recent shift in preferred pedagogy may contribute to a mismatch between what teachers and parents expect for young children's transition to JK. Parents, from their past experiences, may believe that academics are important; while teachers may believe being independent and having social skills are more important.

In addition to these curriculum changes affecting expectations for Kindergarten, the cultural background of parents might also shape their expectations for children's first year in formal schooling. For example, McNaughton (2001) found that parents in the Maori culture in the South Pacific felt that it was the teacher's responsibility to teach literacy skills, such as instructing the child to write their name in early schooling, while New Zealand teachers believed that parents should teach their children to write their name prior to attending formal schooling. Congruency between parents' and teachers' expectations can improve a child's school success as can "a positive interaction of the child's developmental characteristics, school practices, and family and community support" (Grace & Brandt, 2006, p. 252).

Success in Early Schooling

Howe, Jacobs, and Fiorentino (2007) believe that "Kindergarten is the bridge between home and formal schooling" (p. 211), that is, the home environment is reflective of school-based practices that occur with young children: the encouragement of intellectual skills (Rodriguez & Tamis-LeMonda, 2011), and written and oral language or literacy skills (Sénéchal, LeFevre, Thomas, & Daley, 1998). Parents who take the time to complete certain types of literacy activities at home such as bringing a child to the library or reading books, can help predict the development of future school skills such as literacy (Cairney, 2003), general knowledge (Christian, Morrison, & Bryant, 1998; Griffin & Morrison, 1997), and mathematics (Fails Nelson, 2005). However, the development of such activities is not solely dependent on the amount of time or frequency of completion, but it is also dependent on the intensity of the home learning environment. These two factors are associated with aspects of school readiness (Zill, 1999), cognitive growth (Christian et al., 1998; Zill, 1999), high school achievement (Bus, van IJzendoorn & Pellegrini, 1995; Edwards et al., 2010; Gilliam, Gerla Parten, & Wright, 2004), and pre-academic skills (Christian et al.,

1998). Nonetheless, these outcomes can only be developed and achieved when a connection among schools and parents is maintained.

Children are known to perform better and have greater success in the transition to formal schooling when parents and teachers have a strong relationship and similar expectations for Kindergarten (Barbarin et al., 2008). Therefore, ensuring that parents and teachers have consistent expectations about formal schooling helps to assure a smooth transition to JK, which supports children's overall development. Research has also found that children are more likely to have improved school readiness at Kindergarten when curriculum approaches are blended between parents and teachers (Graue, Clements, Reynolds, & Niles, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

This research hopes to address which skills Ontario Kindergarten teachers deem most important for children in the JK classroom and the skills parents believe are most important for the transition to school. Furthermore, the types of early learning activities that are completed at home, and how parents and teachers can work together efficiently to extend this learning, are explored.

Given the diversity I, as an educator, have witnessed in children's knowledge when they begin Junior Kindergarten, as well as the research that demonstrates differences in parents' and teachers' expectations for Kindergarten, the goals of this research project are fourfold: (1) to gain awareness of the activities that parents engage in as part of the home experience to support children's literacy learning on formal school entry; (2) to gain knowledge of parents' expectations for children's learning in the JK year; (3) to better inform parents of the expectations that Kindergarten teachers have for children entering JK, particularly in light of recent changes in the Ontario Kindergarten curriculum; and (4) to provide recommendations to parents, teachers, and schools about effective activities and transition practices that will ensure children are prepared for

JK. By comparing the expectations that parents have to what teachers' believe is important, and making recommendations based on this, will help ensure that parents and teachers can adequately assist children during the transition to school.

To achieve the above goals, the following four questions guided the study:

(1) What are the types of activities parents engage in with children at home prior to and during JK to support children's success in school?

(2) What are teachers' beliefs about the importance of these activities for JK?

(3) What are the similarities and differences in parents and teachers' expectations for children's learning by the end of JK?

(4) What are the implications of the study's findings for facilitating smooth transitions for children from the home to the JK classroom? If so, what are these?

This thesis includes five chapters. The first chapter introduced key issues related to the study. These issues include the importance of parent involvement and children's transitioning to school, as well as the significance of the proposed research. Chapter 2 provides a literature review related to the home-school transitioning explored in this thesis. It begins with a theoretical perspective guiding the inquiry based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and is followed by a review of the existent literature focused on the impact of the home-learning environment on various topics, communication about expectations and skills that are valued in Kindergarten, factors impacting the transition to school, and a focus on Kindergarten in the local context. In Chapter 3, the methodology and research design are explained and Chapter 4 presents the research findings. The elements of Chapter 5 include a discussion of the findings, implications for practice and recommendations for future research, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This review of the literature focuses primarily on the beliefs and expectations of parents and teachers as well as the activities a parent, teacher, and the school in general engages in to support a child's transition to JK. The examination of these components in the study is grounded in the ecological systems framework. Following this, the review of literature will focus on the home-learning environment, concentrating on language, literacy, and socio-emotional development and its impact on school success. Additionally, Kindergarten teacher expectations that are communicated to parents, and the specific expectations that are often valued by teachers and parents will be presented. Factors, such as parental education, that can impact parent expectations for JK and children's home-learning environment, and thus, their successful transition to school, will be shared. Finally, aspects of the Kindergarten curriculum in the local context will be presented.

Theoretical Perspective

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

This research will be guided by Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986), a child is embedded in the midst of four concentric circles, each representing four distinct environments. The child is directly and/or indirectly influenced by each of these four environments in various ways. The environment immediately surrounding the child, the mesosystem, is the one with the greatest impact on a child's development. This environment consists of family, school, medical professionals and day care centres. In this research, it is assumed that the family and the school have the most significant impact on the child's development concerning school success and transition. These two environmental components have a profound influence on the child. According to this theory, the family's practices, parenting methods, background, values, morals, culture, and beliefs have a

strong impact on child development. Similarly, the school environment of teachers, early childhood educators and educational assistants also shape child development through their beliefs, teachings and values. Each of these factors is presumed to influence the child, but they can also influence one another within each system. The child, however, is not static in this model as s/he can also influence how they interact with the family or school. All of these components in the model work together bi-directionally, to influence and impact one another as well as the child's overall development, including, in particular, a child's motivation and academic achievement.

In relation to this study, the focus on the ecological systems framework is to primarily look at consistencies and differences in parent-teacher beliefs and practices, and potential influence on children in the JK classroom. That is, how the involvement between the teacher and the parent may impact the child. For example, if the teacher does not let the parent know that their child is unable to zip up their coat but that their child should be able to perform this task, then the parent will not be able to attempt to remedy the situation. If a parent is unable to teach their child how to zip up their coat or would rather complete it for their child, the teacher will have to do it for this child when they are at school. Numerous other skills or activities related to the transition to Kindergarten can be applicable to the interacting relationships of this model.

Literature Review

Home-learning environment.

Connections to school success.

National Household Education Surveys completed in the United States found that a good majority of parents work with their preschool children to provide home-learning activities on a regular basis (Zill, 1999). These activities are often teachable moments that provide skills to help prepare children for upcoming schooling and focus on augmenting skills and discovery of learning.

According to this survey, the specific type and amount of learning activities completed by the parent at home may positively impact the child's developmental position when they enter Kindergarten (Zill, 1999). Some examples of types of learning activities provided by parents that impact a child's early learning consist of reading, teaching the alphabet and numerals, and bringing them to the library or going on other excursions (Votruba-Drazal, 2003). Promoting these activities at home predicts higher achievement scores and academic success in the transition to school (Cooper, Crosnoe, Suizzo, & Pituch, 2010; Graves & Wright Brown, 2011).

To expand on the importance of home activities for children's Kindergarten academic skills such as literacy, math, and science skills, children who had reading materials provided to them, and whose parents frequently read to them, performed well on reading assessments at the kindergarten level (Cooper et al., 2010; Graves & Wright Brown, 2011; Joe & Davis, 2009). Parents who provided cognitively stimulating materials, completed educational or science activities or conversed about nature with their children helped predict children's Kindergarten math scores (Cooper et al., 2010; Hill, 2001; Joe & Davis, 2009). Further to this, the practice of completing language and cognitive activities at home has a strong function in promoting children's language development (Lau et al., 2011) and cognitive growth (Christian et al., 1998; Lau et al., 2011). Various aspects of academic skills are accentuated and higher achievement scores are observed in Kindergarten when parents provide stimulating early learning activities.

The home-based factor that has the most significant effect on school achievement during Kindergarten is the literacy environment (Froiland, Peterson, & Davison, 2012). Acquiring emergent literacy skills during the early years is important for children's school success (Bennett, Weigel, & Martin, 2012; Froiland, et al., 2012; Ming & Powell, 2010). Given that the basis for academic success is a child's ability to read (Timmerman, 2013), the home environment should be the place where emergent literacy skills are taught and encouraged. White-Kaulaity (2007) noted

that the "seeds of literacy are planted not only by adults in school classrooms but also by adults in the home" (p. 569). When parents complete home-learning activities, it provides children with the motivation to learn and a desire to do well in school (Fails Nelson, 2005).

A focus on emergent literacy.

Early involvement of parents through the provision of literacy activities such as formal teaching and storybook reading in the home environment contributes to and predicts literacy development and skills for Kindergarten entry (Bennett et al., 2002; Griffin & Morrison, 1997; Haney & Hill, 2004; Sénéchal et al., 1998). Such involvement and provision of activities at home ultimately leads to success in reading (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2001). Various types of home literacy activities impact a child's literacy in different ways (Sénéchal & LeFevre 2002); however, one of the most common early learning activities that helps develop a child's academic skills, such as language and writing, is interactive storybook reading (Mol, Bus, & de Jong, 2009).

Interactions in shared storybook reading are most likely to improve a child's vocabulary knowledge (Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Manolitsis, Georgiou, & Parrila, 2011; Sénéchal et al., 1998; Sénéchal, 2006), but are not likely to promote the development of letter knowledge skills in children unless parents focus on the print when reading to children (Justice & Sofka, 2010). One might expect that parents who frequently read storybooks to their children would also be inclined to teach their children about reading, writing or letter recognition; however, this is not always the case (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000; Sénéchal et al., 1998).

Children's age may affect parents' interactions with children in storybook reading. Children who were advanced readers had parents who provided them with more chances to interact with information, words, sounds, pictures, letters, sentences, and story-related concepts than non-readers

(Burns & Collins, 1987). Such parents took the opportunity to "[coach their child when] learning about letters and [taught them] how to break the code, and [did] not assume that reading books in itself will enhance their [child's] literacy skills" (Evans et al., 2000, p. 73). When children and parents actively participate in interactive book reading, not only does it improve their reading abilities and vocabulary, but it can also lead to improved receptive language (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), understanding of print and verbal language (Mol et al., 2009; Sénéchal et al., 1998), and early literacy skills (Moschovaki, 1999).

Other components of the home-learning literacy environment beyond interactive storybook reading can have a positive impact on child development. Letter recognition is one such example and is usually not taught within storybook reading with preschool age-children. Letter knowledge and recognition skills are improved by the provision of direct instruction in the home-learning environment (Haney & Hill, 2004; Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Manolitsis et al., 2011; Sénéchal et al., 1998; Stahl, 2003), which can be completed, for example, by interacting with alphabet books (Stahl, 2003). Also, children who received frequent alphabet instruction in the home were able to recognize letters better than children who did not (Evans et al., 2000; Haney & Hill, 2004), and tended to have higher vocabulary scores (Haney & Hill, 2004). It is essential for children to acquire an understanding and proficiency about the letters of the alphabet since it is one of the key components prior to learning how to read (Gerard, 2004). However, according to Stahl (2003), not all letters of the alphabet must be known to be able to read, but: "knowledge of the alphabet supports growth in word recognition, spelling, and phonemic awareness" (p. 370) and can significantly forecast future school achievement (Lafferty, Gray, & Wilcox, 2005). Overall, when a parent takes the time to provide home literacy experiences, the child has a strong base for future literacy and academic success.

Socio-emotional development.

In addition to cognitive skills, parents support the development of children's socio-emotional skills in the early years. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) (2003) found that the home environment not only predicts cognition, success, and speech but also social development (p. 587). In fact, many of the activities that parents complete to help promote numeracy and literacy often involve taking turns, paying attention, and working together, which help to promote social skills (Hindman & Morrison, 2012). Interestingly, Durand (2010) found that a mother's teaching of social skills, not academic skills were linked to a child's classroom engagement and literacy. Nonetheless, a positive family environment, which includes components of management and discipline can be directly linked to a child developing cooperation and compliance skills (Dennis, 2006; Hindman & Morrison, 2012), as well as children being more competent in social skills (Hindman & Morrison, 2012; NICHD, 2003).

Other components of a positive home environment, which include family routines (Martin, Razza, & Brooks-Gunn, 2011), nurturance, expressions of children's value, and guidance, can also lead to the development of self-regulation skills (Dennis, 2006; Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Martin et al., 2011; NICHD, 2003). Children who do not have self-regulation skills developed in early childhood may exhibit signs showing a "lack of cooperation, aggression, and other externalizing behaviours" that could have been a result of living in a less ideal home environment (NICHD, 2003, p. 590). It is apparent that the family environment including affirmative parenting and discipline techniques, instructive learning activities, and parental mental health, can help to predict self-regulation as well as "toddler attachment and cognitive outcomes during the preschool years" (Nievar, Moske, Johnson, & Chen, 2014, p. 329). For example, parents who provide opportunities for children to explore settings outside of the home (e.g., parks, grocery store) give children the ability to learn self-control when they are out in public; they still actively foster resilience and can

promote cognitive development in their children (Nievar et al., 2014, p. 330). Children who were raised in families with high levels of turmoil (e.g., "lack of routine, confusion, and noise") are more likely to exhibit more behavioural problems in Kindergarten (Dumas, Nissley, Nordstrom, Phillips Smith, Prinz, & Levine, 2005, p. 94). In fact, some studies have found that when parents have the television on, a link to concentration issues and violent behaviour was shown (Martin et al., 2011). It is apparent that a supportive family environment "predicted higher levels of sustained attention, lower levels of impulsivity, and the ability for children to regulate their attention, [and these] attention processes predicted achievement, language and social outcomes" (NICHD, 2003, p. 587, 589). Therefore, the home environment can influence the development of socio-emotional skills, which leads to enhanced attention, self-regulation, social skills, being better prepared for school (NICHD, 2003), and a greater likelihood to be more successful in formal schooling.

Teacher communication with parents about Kindergarten expectations.

Expectations for Kindergarten readiness vary depending on the country and province or state, where one resides. Some Kindergarten programs value academic skills (Gill et al., 2006; Ray & Smith, 2010) while others focus on independence (Chan, 2011; King & Boardman, 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989) or interpersonal skills (e.g., listening, following instructions, and directions Gill et al., 2006). It can be beneficial for children to possess numerous types of skills prior to Kindergarten entry, but according to King and Boardman (2006), having as many skills as possible before entering formal schooling is not essential as many skills will be fostered and developed when children enter school.

Yet, the transition to formal schooling from a home environment can be an emotional time for a young child and "there is a need to prepare children personally and socially for the Kindergarten environment" (King & Boardman, 2006, p. 19). Schools are inherently aware that this

is a major event in a child's life and numerous strategies are implemented to assist children with the transition. For example, teachers may invite future children to attend events or visit the Kindergarten classroom prior to starting school (Einarsdottir, Perry, & Dockett, 2008; Gill et al., 2006; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008; Ray & Smith, 2010). Some Kindergarten teachers also meet the child in person (Einarsdottir et al., 2008), by phone (Gill et al, 2006), or through a letter home (Einarsdottir et al., 2008; Gill et al., 2006). Also, parents are often informed about what the expectations are for Kindergarten and readiness (Gill et al., 2006) through meetings prior to the school year (Grace & Brandt, 2006; Einarsdottir et al., 2008; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008), or with letters during or after formal Kindergarten registration a few months before official school entry. Finally, written records about the preschool child provided to the Kindergarten teacher by the preschool teacher (Einarsdottir et al., 2008; LoCasale-Crouch et al, 2008) can also be completed. According to LoCasale-Crouch and colleagues (2008), this activity (written records) had "the strongest and most consistent associations with children's adjustment as perceived by Kindergarten teachers [that is, positive social competence and less negative behavior problems]" (p. 135). However, the feasibility of such a practice may be difficult to establish in some countries because preschool programs and Kindergarten programs are not linked to one another.

Other strategies that are less common include going to a child's home (Gill et al., 2006; Graue, 1998); although some studies (Einarsdottir et al., 2008) have found that teachers do meet with children prior to JK entry, but the location was not specified. In some school boards in Ontario, Canada, when JK was first introduced, this activity was completed; however, it is no longer a current practice. Overall, it is apparent that interactions and conversations between parents and teachers are an essential component to school readiness even though there is variation in terms of how it might take place. Such communication will "ensure the child's needs are being met both

emotionally and academically, which helps ensure the child will be ready for Kindergarten" (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008, p. 347).

Kindergarten knowledge and skills valued by teachers' and parents.

Teachers.

The literature consulted shows mixed findings amongst teachers on the skills and knowledge deemed most important in Kindergarten children. Some Kindergarten teachers value oral communication, listening, curiosity (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989, p. 57), and literacy and mathematics (Kowalski, Pretti-Frontczak, & Johnson, 2001), whereas others value child independence (Chan, 2011; King & Boardman, 2009; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Mirkil, 2010) and/or large and small motor skills (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Zhang et al., 2008). Additionally, other skills that Kindergarten teachers consider important include: following directions (Grace & Brandt, 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989), 'self-control' (Zhang et al., 2008, p. 469) and 'self-regulation' skills (Lin, Lawrence, & Gorrell, 2003, p. 234).

Of all the skills that are valued by teachers, the skills rated highest by Kindergarten and preschool teachers in the research consulted were social skills (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008; Lee, 2006; Lin et al., 2003; Kowalski et al., 2001; Piotrkowski, Botsko, & Matthews, 2000). However, Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2008) found that teachers believe some basic academic skills and content-based knowledge are important.

Parents.

Research that has compared teachers' expectations to those of parents found that parents more often valued academic skills than did teachers for preschool (Barbarin et al., 2008) and Kindergarten children (Chan, 2011; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000). Such skills include children's knowledge of the alphabet, numbers

(Barbarin et al., 2008; Grace & Brandt 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000), colours and shapes (Barbarin et al., 2008; Grace & Brandt, 2006, p. 242), the ability to write on a line (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989, p. 55; Piotrkowski et al., 2000, p. 552), as well as literacy skills such as reading (Barbarin et al., 2008; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000). Social skills were also of paramount importance to parents (Achhpal et al., 2007; Chan, 2011; King & Boardman, 2009; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Piotrkowski et al., 2000) and some researchers found that parents and teachers believed that such skills were of equal importance (e.g. Chan, 2011; Piotrkowski et al., 2000). Although not as common, some research found that parents more highly valued social skills than academic learning or skill development (Lee, 2006; Lin et al., 2003). Furthermore, skills such as being able to sit still, communicate with others (Zhang et al., 2008, p. 469), wait for their turn (King & Boardman, 2009) and be independent (King & Boardman, 2009; Zhang et al., 2008, p. 469) were also considered to be important for parents. These additional skills include self-sufficiency skills such as going to the bathroom on their own (King & Boardman, 2009). However, other research has found that self-help skills were not as important to parents during Kindergarten as other skills such as socio-emotional or academic skills (Achhpal et al., 2007; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989).

It is possible that parents may expect that children have self-help skills prior to Kindergarten entry so there would be no need to concentrate on self-help skills during Kindergarten. Additionally, parents could have already taught these skills to their children, thus deeming such skills as not being important. Other ‘absolutely essential’ skills, which were more important for parents were skills such as listening to the teacher (Piotrkowski et al., 2000) and following directions (King & Boardman, 2009; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Zhang et al., 2008). Since one of the most important concepts of classroom management for teachers is the ability for children

to listen to the instructions of the teacher in charge, it is interesting to note that in these studies, these skills were more important for the parent than for the teacher.

The transition to Kindergarten: Bridging teacher and parent expectations.

Encouraging an established connection among parents and teachers can help diminish the mismatch between parents and teachers regarding what skills teachers expect children to have prior to Kindergarten entry, and what parents believe are the essential skills required. This can be achieved through clear communication of such expectations between teachers and parents. Doing so will ensure that children will have stronger results for a successful school transition (Barbarin et al., 2008). When such connections are lacking, especially for minority or disadvantaged parents, it sets up their children to have diminished success in school (Edwards et al., 2010). Schools seem to have a 'unidirectional' agenda that they want parents to fulfill that makes parents feel disengaged with their child's school (Pushor & Murphy, 2004, p. 232). Parents do not feel valued or respected as information only comes one-way from the schools, in that teachers do not ask parents to provide information in return (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Pushor & Murphy, 2004; Vincent & Tomlinson, 1997). When schools include aspects of children's family and the community outside of the school environment in the school environment, a positive impact on student achievement is likely to occur (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002; Pushor, 2012). Such bi-lateral discussions regarding what parents do at home and learning more about the child's accomplishments at home can significantly help teachers to support children's learning and success during the transition to school.

Learning from parents.

"Parents want to be supportive of their children and to participate in their children's educational success" (Edwards et al., 2010 p. 111); however, numerous factors, often beyond

parents' control, can impact whether or not parents are able to provide such skills. Many parents are minorities from other countries whose second language is English and are unable to read to their children in English, but may read in their native language (e.g., Anderson et al., 2003) or they have limited literacy skills and are unable to respond to requests from the teacher such as to 'read with your child' (Edwards et al., 2010, p. 124). Furthermore, daily stressors such as poverty, inadequate employment or housing, working shift-work, lack of time, or inadequate childcare can significantly impact how engaged parents are in their child's schooling (Edwards et al., 2010; Epstein, 1986; McWayne, Hampton, Fantuzzo, Cohen, & Sekino, 2004). Teachers should be aware that not all parents can complete early learning activities at home that can promote important skills. It is not that parents may not want to be involved; many times there are other factors that prevent them from being involved.

Some parents may complete activities that help prepare their children for Kindergarten transition. These activities, however, may be ones that differ and are not considered legitimate by schools (Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1998). For these parents, these activities are culturally relevant, effective within the child's home, and in the neighbourhoods in which they live (e.g. Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1998). Schools need to acknowledge these activities and begin to make changes to teaching practices to incorporate and welcome such initiatives even though they may not be consistent with school expectations. For example, many cultures do not use storybooks for literacy development (Anderson et al., 2003). However, this does not imply that these children are illiterate or lack the skills for pre-reading and writing. Often times, cultures have different methods that are just as effective in promoting literacy skills, such as those that incorporate the use of oral traditions (Wasik & Van Horn, 2012, p. 6). The simple task of reading books is not the only opportunity where children can develop literacy skills, such as vocabulary knowledge. Parents who provide opportunities for their children to interact with a variety of print resources such as cereal boxes,

store flyers or food labels, can also assist in the development of literacy (Lynch, 2008). Schools must consider alternative types of activities that parents complete at home to help with a child's development and transition to school. Teachers should acknowledge such activities and adjust their traditional school-based strategies to complement these activities within their classroom (Anderson et al., 2003). This is especially true for parents from non-mainstream cultures. Teachers and schools need to look at what is happening at home and learn to augment in school the strengths that many of these families have in their daily lives (Gill et al., 2006).

Bridging with schools.

Families in today's society are incredibly diverse, and "teachers may have problems [matching] their approach to the cultural backgrounds of all students" (Hauser-Cram, Sirin, & Stipek, 2003, p. 818). Schools should ensure that their transition practices are "family-centered, collaborative, and culturally appropriate" (Ray & Smith, 2010, p. 11). Activities such as sending home information letters are not the best strategies to assist children in the transition to Kindergarten for families who are less educated and have language barriers (Gill et al., 2006, p. 222). Parents may not be able to understand what is required of them or what their children are expected to know and accomplish. Such strategies can be completed through increased levels of communication and the provision of coaching and informative sessions between parents and teachers (Gill et al., 2006); however, these transition practices need to occur before the child begins schooling, which often does not happen (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989). When parents who have English as a Second Language (ESL) work with teachers and have the "opportunity to acclimate to a school environment combined with home support, [their children] may have a better chance of being ready for Kindergarten and future academic success" (Pelletier & Brent, 2002, p. 56).

There are some concerns that information provided by schools to homes regarding Kindergarten expectations is not reaching all families, and "children from working-class families who do not meet [the] criteria [for the definition of school readiness] are deemed to be lacking in skills" (Gill et al., 2006, p. 221). Such parents may face many struggles and may not understand or be able to provide the assistance to help their children in the transition to school. For example, in McNaughton's (2001) study, New Zealand teachers expected Maori children to be able to print their name prior to entering school, that is, the teachers believe that the parents of these children should have taught their children this particular skill. On the other hand, the parents felt that the teachers should teach this skill to the children. This mismatch of expectations for school entry between parents and teachers in this example is discouraging. In the North American context, for example, educators in Gill et al., (2006) commented that socio-emotional skills were an essential component to the Kindergarten program as children share, take turns, and play together. Parents may not be aware of this since often they believe other skills should take precedence (e.g. academics in Piotrkowski et al., 2000). Therefore, given the importance of such skills for Kindergarten in this context, parents need to be made aware of this so that they can encourage its' development prior to formal schooling. When teachers hold curricular expectations for children they should be more effectively known to parents.

As soon as teachers work with parents and provide strategies or programming to work with their children, it will increase their self-confidence and provide greater chances of school readiness success for their children (Pelletier & Brent, 2002). Developing consistency among the expectations and transition practices between teachers, parents, and schools is essential for children to ensure that they are optimally prepared for school. Therefore, a common vision of expectations for readiness must be established among all vested individuals in the child's life to ensure that there is a successful transition to Kindergarten (Zhang et al., 2008). When teachers work collaboratively

with parents and take into consideration the cultural practices and home-learning activities of the children that they teach, they become familiar with such differences in cultural or socioeconomic background (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). These practices are essential to a successful transition to Kindergarten (Grace & Brandt, 2006), and provide increased chances for the development of importance skills (King & Boardman, 2006) and improved Kindergarten performance scores in general knowledge and reading (Xu & Gulosino, 2006, p. 363).

For example, children from lower SES families benefitted positively from transition practices employed by Kindergarten teachers (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). Therefore, teachers should continue to use as many transition strategies as possible to help children from economically disadvantaged families have greater success in Kindergarten. Serpell and Mashburn (2012) believe that a positive and collaborative teacher-parent relationship will help parents to be more attuned to suggestions that the teacher makes regarding what is important for their children to know at school. In turn, this will allow parents to provide greater assistance with activities from school to be completed at home with their children (p. 43) to ensure important skills are developed. Paying close attention to and having a close working relationship with families who come from different cultures or low socio economic backgrounds is essential when these children enter Kindergarten, given their lower success rates in schools (e.g., Cooper et al., 2010; Joe & Davis, 2009). This will help to assist the child to develop skills and become successful in transitioning to Kindergarten and achieve success in future grades.

Conclusion.

It is essential to know how different the mismatch is between parent and teacher expectations regarding important skills for Kindergarten. Some caregivers may emphasize skills such as letters, numbers, colours, and shapes, which are important, but they may not realize that

teachers believe other skills are just as important and also need to be developed (Barbarin et al., 2008). Teachers should not assume that parents are unwilling to emphasize skills that are important for Kindergarten. Hauser-Cram and her colleagues (2003) found that when teachers' values about educational expectations differed from parents, "children [were rated] as less competent academically and had lower expectations for their future academic success" (p. 818). Even though value systems may be different from one family to another and are different from school expectations, it is inappropriate for teachers to judge children negatively based on their knowledge or behaviour they bring to school as their parents values may differ than those of the school system.

The local context: Changing curriculum and expectations for JK.

In Ontario, children commence formal schooling if they have reached the age of four on or before December 31st of the current school year. The Kindergarten curriculum is entitled *The Full-Day Early Learning- Kindergarten Program* (Ministry of Education, 2010) and is mandated by the provincial government. The overall goal of the program "is to establish a strong foundation for learning in the early years, and to do so in a safe and caring play-based environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of all children" (p. 1). Within this document, expectations for JK are listed.

Children's age for transitioning from home to school is particularly unique to the local context (age 3-4), and the literature is limited on informing such a transition for this age group, although it is surmised that there may be some similarities with research that is conducted on children's transition to school at around age 4 to 5. The current context is also unique in that the curriculum is one that has a play-based focus, particularly in comparison to some Kindergarten curriculums in US schools, a context where much research had been completed on children's transition to schools. Indeed, research has found that play-based learning is slowly diminishing in

many US preschools that are paid for by certain governmental territories and some Head Start classes (Roskos & Christie, 2011, p. 75). This implies that a greater focus on academics is being taught in the early years' classrooms in the US, including Kindergarten.

A play-based curriculum.

A "Kindergarten child's experience *should* ... [include] the opportunity to learn through play" (Cooney, 2004, p. 270). Lee (2006) found that many preschool teachers believe that children acquire knowledge though play-based learning and should encourage activities within the classroom that were based on "active exploration and discoveries" (p. 436). The Ministry of Education (2010) Kindergarten expectations in Ontario further emphasizes this belief. One of the main goals of the early learning Kindergarten program is to provide such an environment for preschool-age children. In Ontario, this program is similar to the Finnish system where "playing is used daily as a real approach to learning and development, with play integrated seamlessly into the curriculum" (Hyvonen, 2011, p. 75).

The important benefits of play-based learning are an integral part of how children learn (Rothlein & Brett, 1987; Thomas, Warren, & deVries, 2011). Play-based learning promotes the development of the whole child in all areas of development. For example, it supports children's intellectual development (Parmar, Harkness, & Super, 2004) through concept knowledge (Cooney, 2004, p. 268), the ability to problem solve (Hakkarainen, 2008; Rothlein & Brett, 1987), and the development of speech, word knowledge, and imagination (Cooney, 2004, p. 268; Rothlein & Brett, 1987, p. 52) through the use of "thinking, questioning, reasoning, and explaining" (Hyvonen, 2011, p. 79).

The ability to display feelings (Cooney, 2004), a component of emotional development, and social skills, is encouraged by play-based learning (Parmar et al., 2004; Rothlein & Brett, 1987).

Skills such as accepting differences, working with others (Cooney, 2004), and offering their personal perspective (Hakkarainen, 2008) are promoted through play-based learning. Finally, the development of physical skills, such as small and gross motor skills (Cooney, 2004; Rothlein & Brett, 1987) is emphasized in a play-based learning environment.

Other skills that are promoted in play-based learning include self-regulation through the use of taking initiative when working with others or involvement with new activities (Hakkarainen, 2008, p. 298) and "gaining independence, assuming responsibility, experimenting and discovering" within the classroom environment (Rothlein & Brett, 1987, p. 52). Failure to provide children the opportunity to initiate their own learning causes the "children's ideas, imaginations, and inventions [to be] hidden" (Hyvonen, 2011, p. 73). Children who are encouraged to discover on their own are motivated to learn and this can lead to success within the Kindergarten classroom, including children's development of self-regulation skills. Knowing the impact that play-based learning has on a child's overall development and skill development can effect early childhood educators and teachers beliefs about this type of learning in a Kindergarten classroom.

Parents' and teachers' views of a play-based curriculum.

Although studies have shown that play-based learning provides numerous benefits in children's development, teachers and parents may vary in their beliefs about this type of learning. In previous research, some parents believe that play is not important (Rothlein & Brett, 1987) and that academics should have greater priority (Singh & Gupta, 2011; Vong, 2012), and some teachers have similar values (Fung & Cheng, 2012; Rothlein & Brett, 1987). In contrast, some parents do believe that play based learning is important (Cooney, 2004; Parmar et al., 2004; Shiakou & Belsky, 2013), but this may be related to their ethnic background (i.e., European Americans valuing play compared to Chinese parents, (cited in Parmar et al., 2004) or Greek parents, (cited in Shiakou

& Belsky, 2013). Similar to the findings with parents, studies have also found that some teachers realize there is a strong benefit to play-based learning (Hyvonen, 2011; Oliver & Klugman, 2004; Thomas et al., 2011). Parents' and teachers' beliefs about a learning practice may affect the types of activities they engage in with children including ways they support children's early learning. With changing curriculums, including one in the local context, it is important that knowledge is gained about parents' and teachers' beliefs and practices, including those related to play, to support children's school success.

Summary

It is apparent that the home learning environment has a significant impact on early literacy development, school readiness, and school success as experienced during children's transition to Kindergarten. Activities completed within the home environment are the most essential component in helping a child transition to Kindergarten (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008, p. 346). As such, children who are assisted with the transition from their home to school surroundings will be better prepared for school. However, when it comes to communication between teachers and parents prior to children's transition to Kindergarten, discrepancies may exist regarding expectations, school readiness skills, and the types of activities that are completed to assist in the transition. Once children have entered Kindergarten, discrepancies may also exist in the skills that are deemed to be important, particularly when a new curriculum is introduced in a school. Communication between parents and teachers is essential to the success of the child in Kindergarten.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework, parents, teachers, and schools affect children's learning. If teachers do not communicate the important skills required for JK and share some of the expectations that are found in the JK classroom, or teachers do not gain knowledge of, or utilize numerous engagement practices parents participate in to ensure their

child's successful JK transition, then the child may be impacted by this lack of communication. In order to ensure that the important skills for JK are promoted, a smoother transition into Kindergarten is recommended and this typically is the result of a positive teacher-parent relationship (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008). When a strong and positive relationship exists between parents and teachers, children will have greater school success (Galindo & Sheldon, 2012) and improved student performance in early childhood (Xu & Gulosino, 2006, p. 364).

The goal of the present research is to explore not only parents' expectations for JK and the learning that they believe occurs in JK, but it will focus on the expectations of teachers as well for that grade level and what they believe parents' might engage in at home to support children's home-school transition process. Since there is limited research on the impact of play-based learning expectations in Ontario, it is apparent that further inquiry is needed regarding the expectations for JK students by teachers and parents in order to understand and promote an optimal transitioning process for children. Indeed, less is known about Kindergarten teachers' expectations for JK, although they are expected to follow a new curriculum for this grade level.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Description of Methodology and Research Design

This research project involved a purposive sampling recruitment (Patton, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) and a parallel mixed methods design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires completed by the participants (i.e., parents and teachers) and after a short time lapse, qualitative data was obtained through the use of a semi-structured interview with a subset of individuals from each sample group. The parallel mixed method research design implies that questions for both data collection instruments were planned simultaneously prior to implementation, and strives to answer the overall research questions as a whole (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). The use of a mixed methods approach was essential to this project. The questionnaire provided the opportunity to discover important variations in the responses between sample groups or within constructs to be analysed amongst numerical data (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). It addressed whether or not there are significant differences between parent and teacher expectations for JK entry and reports by teachers and parents of early learning activities completed at home. The qualitative data offered further insight about specific early learning activities that were completed, important skills and expectations required for JK, and the transition to JK. This data was obtained through a follow-up interview conducted with a random sampling of participants.

As the research focused on comparing the expectations of parents and teachers of JK students, a comparison-focused sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) was used to look in detail "at the significant similarities and differences between cases and factors that explain those differences" (Patton, 2015, p. 277). Specifically, a matched comparisons (Patton, 2015) emphasis was used to assess the overall differences between parents and teachers together as a whole.

The collection of qualitative data allowed the researcher to "elucidate how systems function and the consequences for individuals", to "illuminate meanings" of the experiences of the

participants, and most importantly to "make comparisons to discover important patterns and themes" between the two groups in the study (Patton, 2015, p. 13). This qualitative data also provided the researcher the ability to further explore responses found in the quantitative survey. Overall, the parallel mixed method design ensured that the results from the quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated, increasing the validity of this study (Patton, 2015).

Participants

The nature of the study involved a purposive sampling technique, that is, a specific population was recruited for the research project (Patton, 2015), consisting of teachers and parents of JK-aged students. The participants were recruited from a large school board headquartered in a mid-size south-western city in Ontario, Canada. Schools were recruited by a superintendent of education on behalf of the researcher through an announcement at a meeting of all elementary school principals in that board. At this meeting, information about the project was disseminated to the principals, which included the distribution of a letter to the principal and the Kindergarten teacher for each school (see Appendix A and B). If a school was interested in participating in this study, the principal was asked to sign the form at the meeting that the researcher would collect, and the researcher would establish further contact with the school. Shortly thereafter, the researcher contacted the four principals who signed the form at the meeting to confirm that the Junior Kindergarten/Senior Kindergarten (JK/SK) teachers at their school would be willing to participate. Two schools confirmed their participation. A third school in the same school board contacted the superintendent after the initial meeting, who then forwarded the schools' information to the researcher. In order to increase the number of JK/SK classrooms participating, the researcher contacted 32 elementary school principals by email in a neighbouring city in the same school board

to recruit more schools for this project. Through this method, four additional schools, to the three initial ones were recruited, for a total of seven elementary schools.

The sample, therefore, included seven schools, 11 JK/SK classrooms, and 12 teachers. Of the seven schools, three schools had all of their JK/SK classrooms participate in the study, for a total of eight teachers. The four remaining schools each had one of their JK/SK classrooms participate, for a total of four teachers (see Table 1).

Table 1

Characteristics of Classrooms that Participated

School	JK/SK Classes	JK Parents Recruited	JK Parents Participating	JK/SK Teachers Participating
1	1	14	8	1
2	1	7	2	1
3	1	18	11	1
4	3	13+12+5	3+2+1	3
5	2	5+8	1+2	2
6	2	13+13	5+8	3
7	1	10	7	1
Total	11	118	50	12

The researcher contacted each JK/SK teacher individually to set up a meeting with the teacher and principal, which involved obtaining required signatures and outlining the study procedure.

This research also involved parents of children who were 4 years of age on or before December 2014. Therefore, only parents of JK students in the JK/SK classroom were recruited to participate in this study. The classroom teacher was asked to distribute a letter of consent to parents (see Appendix C) with a copy of a questionnaire to each JK parent in the class by placing one copy of each item in the JK child's communication bag. The primary caregiver was asked to return the consent form and questionnaire in the envelope available in their child's communication bag or drop it off to the classroom and to seal the envelope. The researcher collected the sealed envelopes

from the classroom teacher within three weeks after the specified return due date. Of the 118 JK parents throughout the 11 JK/SK classrooms that received a copy of the survey and consent form, a total of 50 were returned to the classroom. This resulted in a response rate of 42% (see Table 1).

Description of participants.

Teachers.

Of the 12 teachers who participated in this study, the vast majority were female (92%); there was only one male (8%). All of the teachers had at minimum, a university degree, with teacher certification (e.g. Bachelor's of Education) and a few teachers had obtained a Masters' degree. The majority of teachers in this study were experienced teachers, where 75% (n = 9) taught for 5 years or more; however, 58% (*n* = 7) of these teachers taught JK/SK for two years or less and 42% of teachers taught JK/SK for 7 years or more (*n* = 5).

Parents.

Among the 50 parents who participated in this project, only one parent (2%) did not complete the background information gathered on the questionnaire. Looking at the remaining 49 parents, the majority (84%) was female (*n* = 42). The majority of respondents (92%) also had obtained some post-secondary or graduate education (*n* = 46); only 6% had a high school diploma as the highest level of education obtained (*n* = 3). The majority of parents (78%) were between the ages of 31 and 40 (*n* = 39).

Regarding personal income, the majority of parents (54%) were found to have an income from $40,000 to $99,000. Although ethnic background was not asked of the participants in the questionnaire, teachers at each of the schools commented that the majority (93%) of the JK parents (n = 110) were of White/Caucasian background. This percentage is representative of the population that is typically found within this school board.

Data Collection

Data collection included questionnaires as well as semi-structured interviews completed by teachers and parents. In general, parents and teachers were asked about their expectations for JK, important skills that a child should possess during and at the end of JK, the transition to Kindergarten practices employed by the school prior to the child entering JK, and activities parents have completed at home and teachers' rating of their importance. The topics of statements asked of both groups were similar in content, and only varied slightly in wording.

Questionnaires and related interview data were assigned a corresponding alpha-numerical code based on the school and participant number (e.g. A1.01). The consent form was separated from the questionnaire and placed in a locked filing cabinet to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Shortly thereafter, the researcher conducted interviews with a subset of participants who identified on the questionnaire that they could be contacted for a follow-up interview. Consent forms were collected once more and similar procedures were followed to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the participant. Pseudonyms were also chosen by parents (i.e., Agnes, Beatrice, Charlotte, Janette, Jenny, and Stephanie) and teachers (i.e., Grace, Joanne, Kathryn, Lucy, Paul, Ruth, and Sheila) to ensure their anonymity in reporting the data.

Questionnaire.

Two questionnaires with similar content were developed by the researcher: one for parents (Parental Involvement in Early Learning Activities Questionnaire) and one for teachers (Teacher Rating of Parent Involvement in Early Learning Activities). Both were based on previous research studies (e.g., Barbarin et al., 2008; Chan, 2011; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008) and the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) *Full-Day Early Learning- Kindergarten Program*. To ensure validity, each questionnaire was piloted with three parents of JK students and four JK/SK

teachers who provided feedback about the survey. This feedback and consultation with a researcher who had expertise in survey development resulted in rewording some statements prior to being distributed to participants in this study. The revisions included rewording and providing examples for some statements to ensure that participants would understand the nature of the question being asked. The questionnaire contained statements on two different categories: social skills and cognitive skills as research indicated that both areas were of substantial importance to parents and teachers on child-school transitioning. These statements were scored on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD), where N = neither agree nor disagree. Each category, that is social and cognitive skills, was broken down into two subsections on the questionnaire. The first group of statements involved parents' engagement in early learning activities prior to JK entry. The second subsection focused on expectations that parents and teachers felt should be achieved by the end of JK, which were mostly based on the *Full-Day Early Learning- Kindergarten Program* (FDK), (Ministry of Education, 2010). Other expectations were drawn from the researcher's experience of teaching Kindergarten and child development milestones.

For the parent questionnaire, the first subsection contained a group of statements that asked parents whether or not they have engaged in particular early learning activities with their child (e.g. encouraged interaction with other children) as well as the frequency of these activities prior to JK entry. The second subsection of statements asked parents about their expectations for children by the end of JK (e.g., interacting well with peers). A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix D. The teacher questionnaire (see Appendix E) was slightly different from the parent survey. The first group of statements asked teachers about the importance of the types of activities parents engaged in with their children prior to JK entry to support children's school transition. The second subsection focused on teachers' expectations for students by the end of JK. A higher score for

individual items on the first section of the questionnaires implied that parents and teachers believe that these particular early learning activities were important for children to have completed prior to Kindergarten entry. Higher scores on the second part of the questionnaires indicated which skills parents and teachers believed were important for Junior Kindergarteners to have completed at the end of the JK year.

In addition to the two subsections of the parent and teacher questionnaire, parents and teachers were provided the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions about what is important to prepare children for JK and what is important to learn in JK, as well as to add any other qualitative comments they might have about the topic or survey.

Semi-structured interview.

Consent to participate in an interview were grouped based on the school, teacher, and parental consent for an interview. Although seven schools participated in this study, one school had no parents with given interview consent (see Table 1). Therefore, one parent from the remaining six schools who provided consent for an interview was contacted after being randomly selected by drawing their phone number from a box. Of these six parents, five agreed to participate; however, successful contact with another parent similarly sampled from the same school resulted in six parents. All of these parents were female and of Caucasian descent. Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were conducted either in the parent's living room or at a coffee shop for approximately 40 minutes. A list of the questions asked of parents is included in Appendix F.

Additionally, one teacher from each of the six schools was contacted to participate in an interview. As three schools had more than one JK/SK classroom teacher who consented to participate, the teacher of the child whose parent had agreed to an interview was asked to participate. Teachers were contacted by their preferred mode of contact, all of which was through

email and each consented. Overall, a total of seven teachers participated in the follow-up interview, as one school's JK/SK classroom was split among two teachers and both had participated. The interviews were conducted at the teacher's school for approximately 25 minutes. Questions asked of the teachers are included in Appendix G.

Prior to the start of the interviews with parents and teachers, all participants were provided with information about the purpose of the study and assurances that confidentiality and anonymity would be upheld to the fullest extent possible by law. Informed consent forms were signed by participant and researcher (see Appendix H and I), and interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy and transcription purposes.

Data Analysis

The mixed methods design provides the opportunity for the triangulation of data from both qualitative and quantitative sources (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which increases the validity of this study through "cross-data validity checks" (Patton, 2015, p. 316). As this study had a mixed-methods design, parallel mixed data analysis (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was used, which included analyzing quantitative and qualitative data in two separate, but parallel processes and then integrating understandings from each process to form conclusions (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 266). First, quantitative data from the questionnaires was analyzed as a whole, comparing parents and teachers. Then, qualitative data from interviews completed separately by parents and teachers were compared. Thereafter, data from questionnaires and interviews from parents and teachers were integrated to create categories and generate information related to the research questions. This analysis supported the development of the discussion, which provided further insight on the research purpose. The following outlines specific details of the data analysis.

Quantitative analysis: Questionnaires.

The quantitative analysis was guided by two hypotheses. The null hypothesis would determine whether there was no difference in expectations between parents and teachers for early learning activities for children prior to JK or types of skills children should accomplish by the end of JK. On the other hand, the alternative hypothesis was that there was difference in expectations between parents and teachers for early learning activities for children prior to JK or types of skills children should accomplish by the end of JK. Data analysis for the questionnaires involved the use of SPSS software to calculate descriptive statistics based on the questionnaire (e.g. frequency of completion of early learning activities for parents, measures of central tendency such as the mean, measures of variability such as the standard deviation, and a summative score for each section of the questionnaire for parents and teachers). Additionally, as the purpose of this research project was to compare the expectations of parents and teachers about the types of early learning activities completed prior to JK and expectations to be achieved by the end of JK (i.e., two subsections of the questionnaire), inferential statistics such as parametric tests that compare two or more groups were considered for this analysis (i.e., independent measures *t*-test) (Creswell, 2012). Within the independent measures *t*-test output, the Welch's *t*-test value was utilized because the equality of variances were not assumed for this data given that the sample size for each group not only varied, but happened to be small (i.e., 50 parents and 12 teachers) and hence, the potential for non-normality of data was likely to occur (Cribbie, Wilcox, Bewell, & Keselman, 2007).

The summative score for each section of the questionnaire for parents and teachers was tabulated. When a difference was observed in the overall scores for each subsection between parents and teachers by way of mean differences and Welch's *t*-test values, additional Welch's *t*-tests were completed for each statement in the questionnaire to determine what was most likely to be different between parents and teachers. If a significance level of .05 or less was computed

among the Welch's *t*-test for any of the statements found in either section of the questionnaire, then the first hypothesis would be rejected. That is, there was a lack of differences between that particular expectation amongst parents and teachers for certain early learning activities completed at home prior to JK, or expectations for what a child should learn by the end of JK. Otherwise, the alternative hypothesis would be deemed to be correct in that there were differences among the expectations between parents and teachers in certain early learning activities completed at home prior to JK, or expectations for what a child should learn by the end of JK if the significance value was less than .05.

Qualitative analysis: Interviews

Following the analysis of the quantitative questionnaires, the audio recordings of all parent and teacher interviews were listened to twice and then were selectively transcribed based on the interview questions. Furthermore, comments that parents and teachers strongly focused on in the interview were transcribed, for example, explaining the importance of an expectation in relation to their child.

Interview data was separated into two groups for analysis: parents and teachers. Similar questions were asked of all participants and therefore responses were organized based on the question. The researcher began by reviewing the parent qualitative data first by looking for similarities in responses across all parents for each individual question. Notes were recorded of the similar response patterns. The same process was engaged in for teachers. Subsequent to this, the researcher compared similarities and differences in interview responses across parents and teachers for each question.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to compare the importance of early learning activities between parents and teachers for JK students as well as the activities that parents completed prior to the start of JK in relation to what teachers' believe are important for JK preparation. It also aimed to compare some of parents' and teachers' expectations for children in JK.

The guiding questions of the study were: What are the types of activities parents engage in with children at home prior to and during JK to support children's success in school? What are teachers' beliefs about the importance of these activities for JK? What are the similarities and differences in parents' and teachers' expectations for children's learning by the end of JK? Finally, what are the implications of the study's findings for facilitating smooth transitions for children from the home to the JK classroom?

This chapter will begin by reporting the results from the questionnaires. This information includes the overall findings and individual items from each section of the questionnaire for parents and teachers (i.e., the types of early learning activities completed prior to JK (section A), the expectations that a child should achieve by the end of JK (section B), and the frequency and importance of the completion of early learning activities). Following this, results from the interviews for parents and teachers will be presented, including themes revealed from the interview questions (i.e., preparation and activities completed prior to the JK transition, expectations about JK and the transition process from schools, play-based learning and JK, and expectations for JK). In conclusion, the focus is to share the differences between parents and teachers, by combining the survey and interview results for further analysis and future recommendations in Chapter 5.

Questionnaire

Overall findings.

The summative score for each of the components of in questionnaires (i.e., Section A and B) was computed for both parents and teachers (see Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive statistics: Differences in average score between parents and JK teachers responses for the overall questionnaire

	Parents		JK Teachers	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
(A)Early learning activities before JK	85.52	7.831	80.24	10.242
(B)Expectations by the end of JK	90.45	7.811	83.31	10.150*

*$p < .05$

Parents scored higher than teachers in section A (i.e., the importance of types of early learning activities completed prior to JK), which accounted for a difference of 5.28% in the mean average score between parents (M = 85.52, SD = 7.83) and teachers (M = 80.24, SD = 10.24) regarding the importance of the completion of early learning activities prior to JK. Although a moderate effect size of 0.53 was found, overall, there was no significant difference between parents and teachers, $t(14.37) = 1.66$, $p = .117$ in the importance of the completion of the early learning activities as a whole. Parents also scored higher than teachers in section B (i.e., the expectations that a child should achieve by the end of JK). However, for this section, there were significant differences between parent and teacher expectations of JK learning outcomes, $t(12.84) = 2.19$, $p = .047$, $d = 0.73$ and a difference in mean of 7.14% between parents (M = 90.45, SD = 7.81) and teachers (M = 83.31, SD = 10.15). Two major goals of the study were to determine which early learning activities would assist JK students achieve a successful transition as well as which expectations during JK were different between parents and teachers. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct

further analysis to pinpoint some of the differences between parents' and teachers' expectations and early learning approaches for enabling student success.

The importance and completion of early learning activities prior to JK.

Although no differences overall were found between parents and teachers on 15 of the 21 early learning activities analyzed, there were significant differences found between parents and teachers regarding five early learning activities that parents completed with their children. That is:

- providing their child access to computer technology (Q17)
- reading storybooks to their child (Q16)
- encouraging their child's independence (Q13)
- encouraging the use of workbooks with their child (Q7)
- encouraging their child to build with Lego blocks (Q19).

Parents.

Of the five early learning activities that accounted for significant differences between parents and teachers, four were found to be more important to parents (see Table 3). First, the use of computer technology (Q17) prior to JK was found to be statistically significant, $t(34.28) = 4.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.33$. It was considered more important by parents ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.99$) than by teachers ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.51$). Second, more parents believed that the use of workbooks prior to JK entry was important ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.89$) as compared to teachers ($M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.40$) with a significance of $t(13.20) = -2.79$, $p = .015$, $d = 0.89$. Finally, parents also perceived that building with Lego blocks (Q19) was more critical for early learning ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.54$) than did teachers ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.73$). The Lego activity was also considered to be significant, $t(13.98) = 2.38$,

p = .032, d = 0.76. Overall, this indicates that parents perceived the use of computers, using workbooks, and building with Lego blocks) to be of importance than other activities in comparison to teachers for early learning activities prior to the start of JK.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics: Differences in early learning activities prior to JK between parents and JK teachers

	Parents		JK Teachers	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
(1) Talking with their child	4.50	(0.647)	4.58	(0.515)
(2) Engage in make belief play	4.42	(0.538)	4.50	(0.674)
(3) Make belief play with others	4.32	(0.768)	4.50	(0.674)
(4) Talking about pictures in books	4.31	(0.713)	4.58	(0.515)
(5) Interaction with other children	4.62	(0.490)	4.58	(0.515)
(6) Developing responsibility	4.58	(0.642)	4.58	(0.515)
(7) Using activity or work books	4.02	(0.892)	2.83	(1.403)**
(8) Sharing belongings with others	4.82	(0.438)	4.75	(0.452)
(9) Teaching how to print their name	4.08	(1.047)	3.83	(1.267)
(10) Cutting and pasting with materials	4.08	(0.804)	4.33	(0.888)
(11) Printing several letters of alphabet	3.90	(0.974)	3.25	(1.215)
(12) Paying attention while reading	4.72	(0.454)	3.75	(1.138)
(13) Encouraging independence	4.58	(0.609)	4.92	(0.289)**
(14) Teaching to count up to 15 or more	4.30	(0.814)	3.50	(1.314)
(15) Using flash cards with letter words	3.24	(0.969)	2.58	(1.730)
(16) Reading story books	4.86	(0.351)	5.00	(0.000)**
(17) Using computer technology	3.94	(0.998)	3.08	(0.515)***
(18) Playing with puzzles	4.26	(0.777)	3.83	(0.718)
(19) Building with Lego or blocks	4.54	(0.542)	4.00	(0.739)*
(20) Using flash cards with numbers	3.12	(0.904)	2.58	(1.564)
(21) Engaging in outdoor play	4.72	(0.573)	4.67	(0.492)

Note. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Teachers.

For teachers, two early learning activities were found to be of more importance to teachers than to parents (see Table 3). First, reading of storybooks to children (Q16) was more important, as all teachers (M = 5.00, SD = 0.00) responded that this was an essential activity to be completed

prior to JK compared to parents (M = 4. 86, SD = 0.35). This activity was found to be significant, $t(49) = -2.82$, $p = .007$, $d = -0.90$. Additionally, teachers felt that encouraging independence (Q13) (e.g., put on own shoes, coat) among children prior to JK entry (M = 4.92, SD = 0.289) was slightly more important than did parents (M = 4.58, SD = 0.60) and the difference between the two participants was also significant, $t(37.46) = -2.80$, $p = .008$, $d = -0.90$. Therefore, this seems to indicate that teachers felt that parental reading of storybooks to their children (Q16) and encouraging independence (Q13) were slightly more important early learning activities that should be completed prior to JK entry in comparison to parents.

Descriptive similarities between parents and teachers.

There were a number of early learning activities that both parents and teachers felt were strongly important to complete prior to JK entry (see Table 3) given the higher score and often similar means. These activities include encouraging social skills. Examples of social skills prior to JK included: sharing belongings with other children (Q8) (M = 4.82, SD = 0.43 for parents and M = 4.75, SD = 0.45 for teachers), engaging in outdoor play (Q21) (M = 4.72, SD = 0.57 for parents and M = 4.67, SD = 0.49 for teachers), and interacting with other children (Q5) (M = 4.62, SD = 0.49 for parents and M = 4.58, SD = 0.51 for teachers). Additionally, some activities prior to JK that encouraged developing responsibility (Q6), such as cleaning up toys and completing chores, were rated equally by parents and teachers (parents: M = 4.58, SD = 0.64, teachers: M = 4.58, SD = 0.51).

Lower ratings were given by both teachers and parents for a number of early learning activities to be completed prior to JK such as: printing of several letters of the alphabet (Q11) (M = 3.90, SD =0.97 for parents, M = 3.25, SD = 1.21 for teachers), using flashcards with letter words (Q15) (M = 3.24, SD = 0.96 for parents, M = 2. 58, SD = 1.73 for teachers), and using

flashcards with numbers (Q20), (M = 3.12, SD = 0.90 for parents, M = 2.58, SD = 1.56 for teachers).

Expectations that a child should achieve at the end of JK.

Of the 22 expectations that were analyzed on the questionnaire, significant differences were found between parents and teachers regarding seven learning outcomes that a child should achieve by the end of JK, the majority of which centred on academic skill development. The following items were identified:

- the child should be able to count to 15 or higher (Q4)
- should identify common shapes (Q2)
- should be able to print three-letter words (Q11)
- can recognize simple words (Q13)
- know most letters of the alphabet (Q12)
- complete simple fine motor skills (Q5)
- can sort and classify objects (Q21)

Parents.

Parents, more than teachers, expected the child to achieve the above-mentioned learning-outcomes by the end of JK (see Table 4). Specifically, significant differences were found between parents (M = 4.67, SD = 0.59) and teachers (M = 3.67, SD = 0.65) in expecting that a child would be able to count to 15 or higher (Q4) by the end of JK, $t(15.73) = 4.88$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.57$. Second, parents (M = 4.73, SD = 0.49), more than teachers (M = 3.83, SD = 0.71), wanted their children to be able to identify common shapes (Q2), and a significant difference was found, $t(13.62) = 4.12$, $p = .001$, $d = 1.32$. Third, parents (M = 4.08, SD = 0.88) were more likely to feel that their children should be able to recognize simple words (Q13) more than did teachers (M = 3.09, SD = 1.13),

t(12.86) = 2.71, *p* = .018, *d* = 0.90. Fourth, parents presumed that their child should have basic literacy skills such as some knowledge of the alphabet and the ability to print. For example, parents (*M* = 4.55, *SD* = 0.61) expected their child should know most letters of the alphabet (Q12) by the end of JK as compared to teachers (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 0.83), *t*(12.56) = 2.41, *p* = .032, *d* = 0.80. Fifth, being able to print three-letter words (Q11) was of greater significance to parents (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.05) as compared to teachers (*M* = 3.08, *SD* = 0.90), *t*(19.24) = 2.90, *p* = .009, *d* = 0.97. Finally, sorting and classifying objects (Q21) was also considered to be more important to parents (*M* = 4.65, *SD* = 0.52), when compared to teachers' expectations (*M* = 4.17, *SD* =0.71), *t*(13.98) = 2.20, *p* = .044, *d* = 0.71.

The only non-academic skill that was deemed to be more important for parents than teachers was the ability to complete activities requiring simple fine motor skills (Q5), such as cutting on a straight line with scissors. Parents (*M* = 4.35, *SD* = 0.69) were more likely to believe that this expectation should be achieved by the end of JK compared to teachers (*M* = 3.83 *SD* = 0.71) and a significant difference was found, *t*(16.41) = 2.23 *p* = .040, *d* = 0.72. Overall, parents were more likely than teachers to have greater expectations of academic skills that their child should achieve by the end of JK. Specifically, the differences were found in the following academic areas: being able to count to 15 or higher, identifying common shapes such as a square, triangle or rectangle, being able to recognize simple words, print three-letter words, know most letters of the alphabet, and being able to sort and classify objects.

Teachers.

Teachers on average did not rate any of the expectations by the end of JK (see Table 4) significantly higher than parents or have significant differences in learning outcomes.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics: Differences in parents' and teachers' expectations for children at end of JK

	Parents		JK Teachers	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
(1) Interact well with peers	4.57	(0.540)	4.42	(0.515)
(2) Identify common shapes	4.73	(0.491)	3.83	(0.718)***
(3) Follow instructions and directions	4.76	(0.480)	4.50	(0.522)
(4) Count up to 15 or more	4.67	(0.591)	3.67	(0.651)***
(5) Do simple fine motor tasks	4.35	(0.694)	3.83	(0.718)*
(6) Read a simple picture book	3.78	(0.919)	3.50	(1.087)
(7) Engage in imaginative play	4.78	(0.422)	4.58	(0.515)
(8) Print their name	4.57	(0.677)	4.33	(0.651)
(9) Say a complete sentence	4.86	(0.408)	4.50	(0.674)
(10) Share with other children	4.71	(0.456)	4.58	(0.515)
(11) Print some three-letter words	3.96	(1.051)	3.08	(0.900)**
(12) Know most letters of alphabet	4.55	(0.614)	3.91	(0.831)*
(13) Recognize simple words	4.08	(0.886)	3.09	(1.136)**
(14) Develop responsibility/control	4.49	(0.545)	4.73	(0.467)
(15) Follow three-step directions	4.73	(0.446)	4.33	(0.778)
(16) Try new things independently	4.63	(0.602)	4.50	(0.522)
(17) Orally retell events/stories in order	4.35	(0.723)	4.17	(0.577)
(18) Take turns	4.69	(0.466)	4.67	(0.492)
(19) Understand the reading process	4.37	(0.782)	4.42	(0.669)
(20) Listen to storybook	4.80	(0.407)	4.58	(0.669)
(21) Sorts and classify objects	4.65	(0.522)	4.17	(0.718)*
(22) Understand concepts of patterning	4.35	(0.694)	4.00	(0.603)

Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Descriptive similarities between parents and teachers.

Certain cognitive and social skills were considered to be important for both teachers and parents prior to JK as high mean scores were calculated (see Table 4). These outcomes included listening to a storybook (Q20) ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 0.40$ for parents, $M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.66$ for teachers) and imaginative play with others (Q7) *(*$M = 4.78$, $SD = 0.42$ for parents, $M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.51$ for teachers). Additionally, children learning to taking turns (Q18) ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 0.46$ for parents, compared to $M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.49$ for teachers) and understanding the reading process (Q19) ($M =$

4.37, *SD* = 0.78 for parents, compared to *M* = 4.42, *SD* = 0.66 for teachers) was rated similarly by both parents and teachers.

Compared to other expectations, lower ratings were shown for both parents and teachers for children reading a simple book (Q6) (*M* = 3.78, *SD* = 0.91 for parents, *M* = 3.50, *SD* = 1.08 for teachers) and printing some three-letter words (Q11) (*M* = 3.96, *SD* = 1.05 for parents, *M* = 3.08, *SD* = 0.90 for teachers). These items, however, are not all a necessary part of the JK/SK expectations, but were included to provide a range of response scores for parents and teachers.

Thus, it seems that both parents and teachers felt that social skills such as interacting with others and taking turns, as well as listening to storybooks, were important expectations to achieve by the end of JK. Both teachers and parents were less likely to believe that academic skills such as reading a simple book and printing some three-letter words were important for children to achieve by the end of JK.

Frequency of parents' engagement in early learning activities.

Results surrounding the frequency of the completion of early learning activities by parents determine which of the activities parents are more likely to complete prior to JK entry. This adds to the data mentioned above by not only reporting on whether or not parents engage in an activity, but how frequently parents engage in activity, which contributes further knowledge about participation.

Among the list of early learning activities in the parent questionnaire, parents recorded the frequency of completion of such activities if they reported whether they strongly agreed (SA) or agreed (A) to having completed that activity. Options for recording the frequency of completion included daily, weekly, monthly, a few times per year, or once a year. All parents reported completing activities that were related to promoting language and literacy skills, such as reading storybooks to their child (Q16) and encouraging their child to pay attention while reading (Q12)

(see Table 5). The majority of these parents (86% and 72% respectively) strongly agreed. Parents were most likely to complete these activities on a daily basis. That is, 84% read storybooks (Q16) and 76% encouraged their child to pay attention during reading (Q12) on a daily basis.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics: Percentage of completion of early learning activities by parents

Early Learning Activity	D	W	M	FY	Y	NR*
(1) Talking with their child	76	14	2	0	0	8
(2) Engage in make belief play	44	50	2	2	0	2
(3) Make belief play with others	40	44	6	0	0	10
(4) Talking about pictures in books	44	44	2	0	0	10
(5) Interaction with other children	52	36	10	0	0	2
(6) Developing responsibility	76	22	0	0	0	2
(7) Using activity or work books	20	40	22	0	0	18
(8) Sharing belongings with others	74	20	4	2	0	2
(9) Teaching how to print their name	12	54	16	0	0	18
(10) Cutting & pasting with materials	16	58	6	0	0	20
(11) Print several letters of alphabet	16	38	20	2	0	24
(12) Paying attention while reading	76	22	2	0	0	0
(13) Encouraging independence	88	4	0	0	0	8
(14) Teaching to count to 15 or higher	32	48	2	0	0	18
(15) Use flash cards with letter words	2	24	24	2	0	48
(16) Reading story books	84	16	0	0	0	0
(17) Using computer technology	32	32	16	2	0	18
(18) Playing with puzzles	24	48	16	2	0	10
(19) Building with Lego or blocks	38	56	4	0	0	2
(20) Using flash cards with numbers	2	14	26	8	0	50
(21) Engaging in outdoor play	66	32	0	0	0	2

Note. D = daily, W = weekly, M = once a month, FY = few times a year, Y = once a year, NR = no response.
*parents who did not strongly agree or agree to completing this activity were not requested to identify the frequency

Parents also reported completing social activities prior to JK entry. For example, all parents encouraged interaction with other children (Q5) with 62% of parents strongly agreeing with this activity. Additionally, sharing belongings (Q8) was reported to be completed 98% of the time. Parents were more likely to encourage the sharing of belongings (Q8) on a daily basis, 78% of the

time compared to interacting with other children (Q5) 53% of the time on a daily basis and 37% of the time on a weekly basis.

Developing a sense of responsibility for taking care of pets and cleaning up toys (Q6) and independence (Q13) were skills that the majority of parents strongly agreed to having completed prior to JK entry at 96% and 94% respectively. They reported practising this on a daily basis. Parents, however, reported that they were more likely to encourage independence (Q13) at 96% than developing a sense of responsibility at 78%.

Teaching or encouraging academic skills such counting up to 15 or more (Q14), printing their name (Q9) or using workbooks (Q7) was reported to be completed at least 80% of the time by parents. The use of computer technology (Q17) and printing letters of the alphabet were completed around 74% of the time. On the other hand, playing academic games with flash cards with letters, words or numbers (Q15 and Q20) was less likely to occur about 39% of the time among parents surveyed.

Overall, the following fine motor and academic skills were likely to occur on a weekly basis or a daily basis. Activities such as printing their name (Q9) at 66%, counting to 15 or more (Q14) at 59%, printing letters of alphabet (Q11) at 50% and using workbooks to promote letter learning, numbers and words (Q7) at 49%. The use of flash cards to play number games (Q20) was more likely to occur on a monthly basis at 52%, while using flash cards to play letter and word games (Q15) was equally completed both on a weekly or monthly basis at 46%. Parents encouraged their children to interact with computer technology (Q17) 39% on a daily basis and 20% on a monthly basis.

In summary, language and literacy activities (i.e., reading and talking to their child), social skills (i.e., sharing, interacting with others), physical skills, and personal skills (i.e., independence and responsibility) were activities that were most likely to be completed by the majority of parents

on a daily basis in order to prepare children for JK. Fine motor skills, some academic skills (i.e., counting, printing, workbook use), and computer use were also completed, but not as often; that is, on a monthly basis. Playing number games with flash cards was less likely to be completed by parents on a weekly basis than playing letter games even though parents were impartial to its importance. Overall, activities that include reading, encouraging independence (e.g., putting on own shoes), encouraging responsibility (e.g., caring for a pet), and sharing with others were likely to be completed on a daily basis. Academic skills and social interaction skills were likely to be completed on a weekly basis or balanced between a weekly and daily basis for parents.

Teachers' evaluation of parents' engagement in early learning activities.

Teachers were only asked to rank the early learning activities they felt were most important for parents to complete with their child prior to the start of JK, not the frequency of completion. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that language and literacy skills should be completed prior to JK. For example, 100% of teachers strongly agreed that parents should read storybooks to their child (Q16); however, only 67% of teachers felt that it was important that a child paid attention during reading (Q12).

Additionally, all teachers agreed that personal skills were important to be completed prior to JK entry. These skills included encouraging independence (Q13) and developing responsibility (Q6). Specifically, 92% of teachers strongly agreed that independence should be encouraged compared to developing responsibility, of which 58% of teachers strongly agreed. Furthermore, teachers felt that play and social skills were also important activities to complete. For example, all teachers agreed that teaching children to share belongings (Q8) and to engage in outdoor play (Q21) were important, where 67-75% of teachers strongly agreed that these activities should be completed. In addition, all teachers felt that encouraging interaction with other children (Q5) was

important, although engaging in make believe play was less likely to be important at 92%, that is, either with parents (Q2) or with other children (Q3).

Fine motor skills and some academic skills were also deemed to be important and completed prior beginning JK. For example, teaching their child to print their name (Q9) was measured at 75% and teaching their child to count up to 15 or more (Q14) was measured at 67%. However, other academic skills were considered less important by teachers, such as parents' teaching their child to print several letters of the alphabet (Q11) (45% agreed), or the use of flash cards to play games with numbers (Q20) or letter and word games (Q15) (33% each). Only 25% of teachers agreed that parents should encourage their child to use activity books or workbooks (Q7). Finally, teachers were less likely to believe that the use of computer technology was essential prior to JK entry as only 17% of teachers felt that parents should assist their child in using computer technology (Q17).

Summary of Questionnaire Findings

The importance and completion of early learning activities prior to JK.

For early learning activities prior to JK, there were differences between the perceived expectation of parents and teachers. Parents, more than teachers, felt that they should encourage children to have access to computer technology (Q17), use workbooks (Q7), and build with Lego blocks (Q19). On the other hand, teachers, more than parents, believed that reading storybooks to children (Q16) and encouraging a child's independence (Q13) were important activities to complete prior to JK.

Both parents and teachers felt that literacy activities (i.e., reading and talking to their child), social skills (i.e., sharing, interacting with others) and personal skills (i.e., independence and responsibility) were activities that should be completed with children prior to JK entry.

Expectations that a child should achieve at the end of JK.

Similarly, differences were also found between parents and teachers for certain learning outcomes by the end of JK. Parents, more than teachers, expected children to be able to count to 15 or higher (Q4), identify common shapes (Q2), to be able to print three-letter words (Q11), to recognize simple words (Q13), to know most letters of the alphabet (Q12), to complete simple fine motor skills (Q5), and to sort and classify objects (Q21) by the end of JK. On the other hand, there were no significant differences where teachers scored higher than parents for expectations that a child should achieve by the end of JK. Therefore, this research shows that parents believe their child should achieve certain learning outcomes by the end of JK as compared to the expectations of teachers.

Interviews

Analysis of interviews was based on the areas of interest in the questions asked of both parents and teachers. These categories are presented in the following order: preparation and activities completed prior to the JK transition, expectations about JK and the transition process from schools, play-based learning and JK, and expectations for JK. A combined analysis of survey and interview data will be presented in the following chapter.

Preparation and activities completed prior to the JK transition.

Parents.

Parents in the interviews reported completing a variety of different activities with their children to help prepare them for JK. Many of the parents stated they encouraged their child to be more independent. Parents reported that children learned independence through activities such as: opening up lunch containers, toilet training, and dressing themselves. Social skills were also a

major factor in parents' developing their children's independence. Such skills were fostered through: going to preschool, day care, social groups and play dates.

Parents also reported that they read to their child and a few parents reported encouraging other cognitive skills such as learning how to count, often through incidental learning. They provided opportunities to practice writing and letter sounds that included the use of workbooks as well as teaching basic math skills, colours, shapes, and letters of the alphabet. Other parents reported playing games and singing songs with their children that often included flashcards with letters and numbers. However, a few parents were unable to complete such activities even though they attempted: "I tried, in vain, to give them opportunities for writing, recognizing... letter sounds… but I don't think they were ready at that time ..." (Janette, JK parent). It was apparent that Janette wanted to ensure that her child was prepared for JK; however, it was evident that her child was not developmentally ready at this point in time. Charlotte, another JK parent, found that when she pushed her child to do certain activities when they were not ready, it would often lead to anxiety and frustration to the point that it impacted their parent-child relationship. Parents in the interview portion of this study realized that they needed to know their child and what they are comfortable with before attempting new activities.

A few parents (i.e., 2 out of 6) also provided children with the opportunity to promote fine motor skill development and recognition skills by utilizing scissors and crayons and placing the child's name around the house so that their child would be able to recognize their name. Finally, a small minority of parents began the routine of "going to school" by making lunches, selecting clothes, and walking to the school and eating lunch in the school playground during the months before school started.

Parents' responses were mixed about the types of activities other parents should engage in to help prepare their child for JK. Not many parents reported that other parents should encourage

language and literacy skills such as reading with their children when asked what they think parents should do to help prepare their child, even though many parents in the survey reported that they engaged in reading with their children. They listed other activities as being more important. For example, a few parents (i.e., 2 out of 6) felt that socializing their children with others was essential, as it would help their child learn social behaviours. A few parents also felt that providing children with the skills to be independent was important, such as doing things on their own, going to bathroom, and getting a snack or drink. Additionally, a small number of parents felt that it was important to develop social skills, such as being involved with their children and interacting with them frequently. They also believed in providing opportunities for children to attend programs where parents do not participate so that children can be comfortable separating from them when JK commences. Further, very few parents encouraged limiting TV time. Finally, some parents felt that although these social and cognitive activities were helpful, timing was often an issue for completion. For example, one mother expressed the following:

> I wouldn't give myself a "mother of the year" award based on how prepared my daughter was for JK. Being a mother of two under the age of 5, working full time and tending to other family needs, I don't feel my daughter was as prepared as she could have been going into JK. I would have liked to spend more one on one time with her, but unfortunately that wasn't the case.

Even though parents do their best to prepare their children for JK, other challenges in life may impact how well children are prepared for the transition to JK.

Teachers.

Teachers overwhelmingly concurred that fostering a sense of independence, developing self-regulation, and socializing children were the most important things that a parent should do to help their child with the transition to JK. For example, children should recognize their name, be able to dress themselves, put shoes on (i.e., without laces such as slip-ons, Velcro or Crocs), open

and close backpacks and lunch containers, clean up after themselves, and to be able to go to the bathroom on their own, including knowing how to pull up their pants, and do up zippers and buttons. Although teachers inform parents at orientation sessions prior to JK entry about the importance of completing such skills, ideally, teachers believe these skills should be fostered over a long period of time. By not encouraging these skills prior to JK, it may pose problems when children start school. Ruth, a veteran JK/SK teacher noted that:

> [it shouldn't be] a surprise on their first day here... [the inability to do] all those things takes an emotional toll in a day that's already pretty long... All of that is about resilience; being able to do those things on your own, because if you can't, it's... like you come in the day and you're emotions are like this whole piece of paper... Every time you hit something you can't do, little bits get torn away, and by the end of the day there's only that little bit of you left, and that's your resilience gone because you needed some to deal with the shoe thing and some to deal with the lunch thing... and you have nothing left, whereas, if some of these things you can do before hand, then you've got enough left to deal with the [other] stuff of your day.

Teachers reported that parents should encourage developing self-regulation in their children, such as having the ability to control one's emotions and ask for help if frustrated. During the orientation sessions, they also encouraged parents to socialize their children with many different people, especially those of a different ethnic background, prior to entering JK. In addition, they recommend that parents give their children the opportunity to participate in play-groups and different extra-curricular activities or programs such as soccer, the early years centre, or the library. Teachers also recommend that parents step back so that their children can adjust to being on their own when they start JK. Some teachers (i.e., 3 out of 7) also felt that parents should read books, talk about school positively, and practice fine and gross motor skills such as holding a pencil, scissors, and colouring at home. A few teachers (i.e., 2 out of 7) noted that parents should no longer provide nap time during the months prior to school, should limit TV and technology, and spend time with their children by playing and asking questions to foster their learning (e.g., how many cars? what colour? what shape?).

Expectations about JK and the transition process from schools.

Parents.

During the interview, parents overall had mixed opinions about the school-based transition activities for JK students and expectations presented about JK. A few thought they were great, a few felt that the activities were not enough, and some did not have an opinion. Thus, when asked what they recommended teachers or schools should do to support the transition to JK, many (i.e., 4 out of 6) parents suggested a "Top 10 Basic Skills" list or checklist that schools send that a child should be able to complete (e.g., dressing oneself, going to bathroom on their own, recognizing their name, socializing their children, and providing a list of books to read). One parent suggested:

> … if you can simplify it in the best way possible… things that your kid should be able to do but they would expect them to do by the time they're in JK… that will help them out and your kid will get more out of [the JK experience]. (Agnes, JK parent)

Jenny, another JK parent insisted that sending out such a checklist before your child enters JK gives parents the opportunity to:

> start working on your kid learning this stuff, [and it] would be wonderful… this small little checklist [of things that] kids should know… [should include a] few basic things, just to start them out so they're not going to be thrown into JK and be out of it compared to the other kids.

Additionally, parents (i.e., 2 out of 6) also wanted significantly more detailed information about the routine and schedule of the JK/SK day and exactly what their child would be learning or the activities that their children would be completing within the context of play-based learning. Although some teachers were providing information that included activities or guiding questions to do at home (e.g., through blogs, newsletters, or pictures at least once a week or monthly), parents felt that more teachers should complete such tasks so that they can talk to their child about what their child has learned. This would enable parents to talk to their child about such events and the desired outcome that the teacher expects for the JK children at the end of the year.

Teachers.

Transition practices differed significantly depending on the teacher interviewed. All schools sent home a registration package that included a booklet produced by the board of education entitled “Welcome to Kindergarten”; however, a few schools included additional information with this package (e.g., pamphlets about play-based learning, healthy eating for children, and information about the JK/SK combined classroom). Most schools held an orientation night for parents and children in late May or early June where information about JK was provided to parents. Finally, according to teachers, the majority of schools work with a staggered entry process in September (i.e., where small numbers of children begin school on different days). Other transition activities varied significantly between schools. A few schools hosted a parents-only orientation night or a summer orientation party with parents and children. Some schools, in late August, either sent a letter or called the parent and/or child personally to welcome them to their school.

Teachers reported that if they had more time and/or money to make improvements to the process of the transition to JK, many would want to perform the following activities: a longer staggered entry process, and increased information about JK to parents, including a list of things your child should be able to do before JK. A few teachers (i.e., 2 out of 7) suggested that the process of staggered entry should be changed extending it until December from October because a significant number of children were still tired by mid-afternoon. Also, a suggestion was made to have short interviews with parents for the first week of school, in the mornings only and then have all the children start the week later. Many teachers felt that parents should have a checklist of top 10 things that they should do with their child or that their child should be able to do before September. It was suggested by teachers that more education around FDK in late August or early September, potentially a curriculum night hosted by the local school board curriculum leader, would ensure that the information is consistent across the school board. Other suggestions included providing a

greater number of age-appropriate resources for parents including books for bilingual language learning as well as purchasing more than one book for children to read at home before entering the program. Teachers noticed that if families were not able to buy books or have access to the public library, it greatly impacted their child's success in the JK/SK classroom.

Play-based learning and JK.

As mentioned previously, teachers aim to meet the expectations for JK through a play-based learning environment. In this study, the concept of play-based learning impacted expectations that parents and teachers had about the JK program and the learning outcomes.

Parents.

Of the parents that were interviewed, the majority (i.e., 5 out of 6) felt that play-based learning had some benefits because they saw that their child was learning while they were playing at school. Despite this, some (i.e., 2 out of 6) had concerns about the play-based program, particularly because it seemed to lack academic structure that was perceived to be required for future grades and future writing opportunities. Parents reported a need for additional printing opportunities for all children, especially for children who were more physically active and who would gravitate towards physical activities in lieu of sitting at a table. Parents noted a need for seat work so as to supplement what they were doing at home. Additionally, one parent, Janette, felt that play-based learning helps develop social skills. However, she also felt that the sheer number of children in the classroom (i.e., 30) with only two adults significantly impacts the type of learning that occurs, as some learning opportunities may be lost.

Teachers.

When teachers were asked if parents understood the purpose and educational importance of play-based learning, the overwhelming majority of teachers felt that overall, parents did not fully

understand the reasons behind play-based learning. However, they felt that understanding the theory behind play-based learning was reflective of individual parents. Almost all teachers felt that parents had not been prepared enough as to why play-based learning was important and beneficial. Several teachers (i.e., 3 out of 7) reported that parents had the impression that their children were 'just playing' all day and wondered ‘when are they going to [start] to learn?’ A few teachers (e.g., Lucy) questioned why parents would have such a limited understanding of play-based learning and wondered how this had evolved. Some wondered if it was due to the fact that play-based learning had been newly introduced at the school, so parents were not familiar with the program. In regards to play-based learning, one teacher stated:

> the difference between understanding [play-based learning] and understanding why we're advocating for it... Most parents understand why and they hear the party line... but I think in their hearts they’re fearful that if left to play, their children aren’t going to be ready for Grade 1. (Ruth, a JK/SK teacher)

Some schools have completed a lot of work over the years where they constantly advocated for and educated parents about the value of play-based learning, and thus now have a decreased amount of resistance. Paul, a JK/SK teacher found that:

> it has taken a lot of talking, a lot of time, a lot of communication, just regular, constant, and openness to criticism. [Parents] need to be able to come with their questions and criticisms and feel comfortable with that in order for me to address them... so you have to have a positive relationship in order to be able to do that.

This communication is essential and it is imperative that parents know what questions to ask and how to engage their children in order to be able to support their learning during play experiences.

Teachers’ beliefs about the importance of play-based learning.

Teachers reported that children tend to learn more when they are interested in what they are learning, especially when it was embedded in play. Independent play provides many chances to practice skill development that was unlikely to be created by the teacher. Paul, a JK/SK teacher

notes that: “independent play facilitates… and makes [these] opportunities possible, but I couldn’t create scenarios as effectively as they do through play.” Overall, teachers felt that learning tends to be grasped more efficiently when implemented in play-based lessons because it’s hands-on and enjoyable, but all learning happens through play, whether or not the environment was structured.

Expectations for JK.

Parents.

The majority of parents (i.e., 4 out of 6) felt that the top two learning outcomes for a child in JK included social skills (e.g., sharing, taking turns, and adjusting to, and being respectful to others) and basic academic or cognitive skills (such as concepts of writing, reading, and spelling simple words). Additionally, other basic academic skills such as learning the alphabet, recognizing and printing letters, including those of their name were deemed important. A few parents (i.e., 2 out of 6) mentioned interpersonal skills (e.g., listening, following instructions, and directions) and personal skills, such as independence and self-confidence skills, as well as emotional skills such as self-regulation, self-control, and responsibility for their actions, behaviours and emotions. Additional skills, mentioned by a small number of parents, included developing a love of learning, a positive attitude/experience toward learning and school, and to simply learn new things and build upon existing skills. Some parents felt that their children should finish JK accomplishing more than what was expected in the curriculum documents for JK/SK academic learning (e.g., counting up to 10) as their children already knew this prior to entering JK.

Teachers.

When teachers were asked to state their top three learning outcomes for a JK student by the end of JK, the overwhelming majority of teachers included self-regulation and pre-literacy or pre-numeracy skills at the top of their list (i.e., recognizing the alphabet). Teachers described pre-

literacy and pre-numeracy skills as an interest in, and/or awareness of numbers 1-10 including phonemic awareness as well as awareness/recognition of the alphabet. Some teachers named recognition (being able to locate your name written on a piece of paper) and independence skills as essential for JK success. A few teachers noted that socio-emotional abilities, fine motor skills, and care for community/personal items were considered essential.

Teachers felt that self-regulation was ultimately the most important learning outcome "because it's a basis for everything in school and in life. That's the biggest thing I find with kids coming in, that's where they need the most work... it helps them deal with everyday problems and their emotions and the school day's environment" (Grace, JK/SK teacher). Many teachers reported that the ability for children to express their emotions in an appropriate manner and to calm down when they are upset will provide them with the tools to deal with stressful situations both in school and other aspects of life.

Teachers reported that the JK program should focus on personal, emotional, and social development. These skills should be acquired first then academic learning can begin. They also recognized that if children have the desire to learn academic skills, then opportunities should be provided for them, if they were developmentally ready. Teachers stated that children will pick up cues from Senior Kindergarten (SK) students to learn expectations and proper behaviours especially since the Kindergarten program is two years in length and often involves mixed classes (JK and SK together). During the two years, children who lack certain skills can be observed so that teachers can work on these skills and thus, they can meet the expectations by the end of SK.

The majority of teachers interviewed felt that to ensure a child's success in JK, parents should read to their child, and to continue to foster and encourage independence skills at home (e.g., dressing self, hanging up coat). Additionally, many teachers felt that parents should take the time to talk with their child about what they've completed at school and provide opportunities for

incidental or authentic learning throughout the day taking advantage of the surrounding environment to learn about numbers, shapes, and letters. Many teachers felt it essential that parents are involved at the school by visiting or volunteering so they become aware of what learning is happening, and in turn, they then become able of promoting to their children a positive attitude about school. Teachers did realize, however, that this may not be possible as many parents may work full-time. Teachers also hoped that parents would be involved in their child's learning by talking to their child about their day. Ruth, a JK/SK teacher, stated that when children "...see that the skills they're growing [at school] are everyday skills that are important at home too, that's where success comes from." A number of teachers felt that it was essential to foster the connection between school and home. When parents "[visit the classroom and communicate with teachers] it builds the relationship and communicates to kids the importance of school, the value of school…" (Paul JK/SK teacher). Some other things that teachers suggested parents could do to ensure success for their children in JK are to engage in play at home, model self-regulation, and involve their child in programs.

Summary of Overall Findings

Early learning activities prior to JK.

Overall, differences between parents and teachers were found for early learning activities that promoted the use of computers (e.g., Q17), academic skills such as using workbooks (e.g., Q7). The survey and interview also revealed differences in the development of self-regulation. Parents, more than teachers, felt that activities promoting academic skills and computer use should be completed prior to JK entry. Parents commented that they promoted the use of workbooks that helped encourage academic skills such as letter recognition and number awareness. Teachers, on the other hand, were adamant that using workbooks were inappropriate for preschool children.

Additionally, many parents commented that they encouraged their children to use computer technology such as Leap Pad Explorer to further promote academic skills, whereas a few teachers commented that parents should limit the use of technology. Teachers, more than parents, felt that the development of self-regulation was important prior to JK entry.

Similarities of the completion and importance of early learning activities prior to JK were found between parents and teachers. Interviews and survey questions revealed that parents and teachers valued activities that promoted socialization (e.g., sharing and interacting with others), encouraging independence (e.g., dressing oneself), and reading storybooks. Survey results showed that parents felt that completing early learning activities such as reading storybooks and developing independence were not as important prior to JK even though the data showed that parents engaged in these activities. In contrast, they felt developing socialization was of greater importance. Hence, teachers also valued activities that promoted socialization, but felt that reading storybooks and developing independence were more important. Teachers believe parents should also focus on completing these activities before children attend formal schooling.

Expectations by the end of JK.

Overall, parents, more than teachers, expected their children to achieve cognitive learning outcomes by the end of JK [e.g., identifying shapes (Q2), counting (Q4), knowing the letters of the alphabet (Q12), recognizing words (Q13), and printing words (Q11)]. A few teachers felt that some academic skills were important, for example, an interest or awareness of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy. However, the acquisition of these skills was secondary to the acquisition of other skills such as personal, social, and emotional skills, such as the development of responsibility and self-control, which includes self-regulation. Teachers and parents, however, both felt that the development of social skills was an important learning outcome by the end of JK.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This research compared parents' and teachers' beliefs about early learning activities prior to school entry and activities and learning outcomes of JK. Specifically, the study found that parents and teachers had both divergent and similar beliefs regarding children's early learning activities prior to JK, as well as expectations for learning outcomes at the end of JK.

Given some areas of divergence between parents and teachers, recommendations to improve the transition to JK will be shared. Chapter 5 is organized to first offer a comparison of the research findings to current studies in literature about the early learning activities parents complete prior to JK and teachers' beliefs about the importance of these activities, as well as the similarities and differences in parents and teachers' expectations for children's learning by the end of JK. Following this, the implications of the study's findings for facilitating smooth transitions for children from the home to JK will be presented. Finally, the limitations, directions for future research, and conclusions will be shared.

Early Learning Activities Prior to JK: Parents and Teachers

In the current research, both similarities and differences were found in the importance and completion of early learning activities between parents and teachers (see Figure 1).

Differences between parents and teachers.

Academic skills.

Like Barbarin et al.'s (2008) findings, this research found that parents felt that preparing their children academically prior to JK (e.g., counting to 15 or more, using workbooks, learning the alphabet) was more important than teachers. In most cases, the parents in this study used workbooks prior to JK entry. Furthermore, like other studies, parents were more likely to report supporting and explicitly encouraging the development of other academic skills, such as knowing

letters of the alphabet, counting (Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Piotrkowski et al., 2000), colours, and shapes (Barbarin et al., 2008; Grace & Brandt, 2006, p. 242) more so than did teachers.

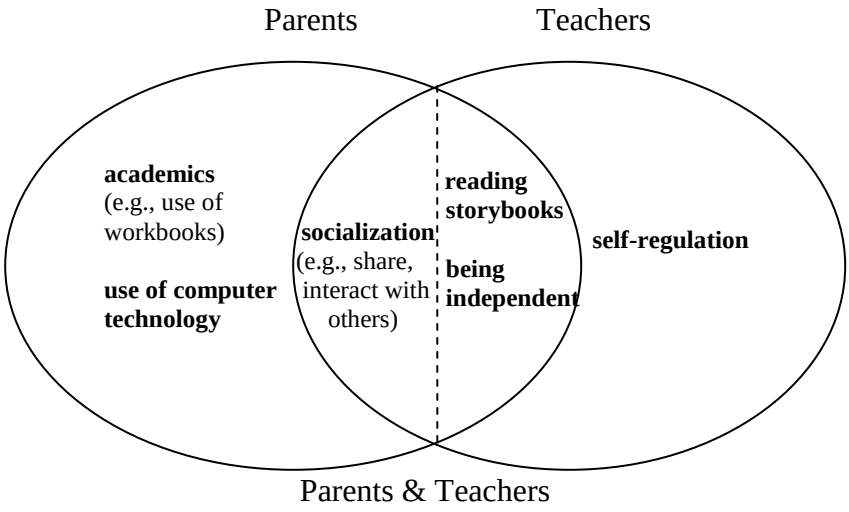

Figure 1: Early learning activities between parents and teachers: Differences and similarities. The line in between the intersection of the circles indicates that although both parents and teachers felt that the activity was important, the activity was of slightly greater importance to the individual on the right or left side of the circle.

Similar to Lee's (2006) findings, very few teachers felt that completing basic academic activities were important prior to entering JK. Many teachers, in particular, adamantly discouraged parents from using workbooks prior to JK entry, considering such activities developmentally inappropriate. Teachers in the current study who encouraged parents to do basic academic activities suggested that they be incorporated as incidental learning. That is, teaching such skills alongside the daily environment surrounding the child (e.g., counting the number of fruit loops in their cereal).

Self-regulation.

Self-regulation is defined as sustained concentration (Rimm-Kaufman & Wanless, 2012) where a child is able to control their behaviour and actions in various situations. In the interview, teachers highlighted that encouraging self-regulation was important, and it seemed to be of greater

importance for JK entry for teachers than for parents. This was similar to the findings of Lin and colleagues (2003). Very few, if any parents in the present study reported encouraging the development of this skill prior to JK entry. Student numbers in a JK/SK classroom are increasing, so it is evitable that children encounter a wider variety of social situations as compared to interactions at home. Thus, the development of personal responsibility skills, which includes self-regulation, may be more important to teachers than to parents due to the school environment when compared to the home environment. Consequently, teachers in this study prioritize activities that promote self-regulation over others. This discrepancy needs to be communicated to parents so they can focus on self-regulation skills when preparing their children for JK. When home and schools are consistent in their practices and beliefs, children's development is positively supported (Cairney, 2003).

Computer use.

Computers are a growing part of today's society and are commonly found in homes and in the classroom environment. In the present study, parents were more likely to use computer technology with their child, most often to promote the development of literacy and numeracy skills (e.g., Leap pad explorer). On the other hand, teachers were more likely to believe that computer use should be limited. This disagreement of the benefits of computer use was also highlighted by McCarrick and Li's (2007) research. Computers are known to provide opportunities to assist children in the learning environment (Roschelle, Pea, Hoadley, Gordin, & Means, 2000) and can impact academic achievement (Klein, Nir-Gal, & Darom, 2000). However, it is important to note that promoting computer use in Kindergarten children impacts cognitive development when children are supervised and parents are actively involved during its' use (Klein et al., 2000). Given the divergent opinion about computer technology between parents and teachers, further research

would be beneficial to determine whether there is an impact of such technology on other areas of development such as social or emotional (e.g., attention and self-regulation).

Similarities between parents and teachers

Social skills.

Consistent with Chan (2011), King and Boardman (2009), Mirkhil (2010), and Piotrkowski et al.'s (2000) research, both parents and teachers in this study agreed that activities involving the development of social skills were important for children to obtain prior to JK entry. Activities that promoted socialization and were valued by parents and teachers include: sharing and interacting with others, going to preschool, attending day care, participating in play dates or social groups. Although both parents and teachers valued the importance of this skill prior to JK, in the interview, parents perceived it to be of greater importance than teachers.

Independence skills.

Additionally, similar to Chan's (2011), Grace and Brandt's (2006), and King and Boardman's (2009) findings, both parents and teachers interviewed in this study concurred that independence and self-help skills (e.g., being able to dress themselves, including putting shoes on, opening and closing containers and backpacks, and being able to go to the bathroom on their own) were important prior to JK entry. In the survey, differences were found between parents and teachers, where teachers felt that fostering such skills were of slightly greater importance than did parents. This finding is also similar to Mirkhil's (2010) study, which noted these skills include name recognition, and the ability to find ones' belongings and coat hook independently.

Storybook reading.

In interviews, both parents and teachers felt that reading storybooks to children was an important activity to complete prior to JK. In the survey, differences were found between parents and teachers where teachers were more likely to find reading storybooks of slightly greater importance than parents. Reading to a child early in their life is an important activity (Christian et al., 1998; Votruba-Drazal, 2003) as it helps to develop vocabulary (Hindman & Morrison, 2012; Manolitsis et al., 2011; Sénéchal et al., 1998; Sénéchal, 2006), is essential to ensuring a child's future success (Cooper et al., 2010; Graves & Wright Brown, 2011; Joe & Davis, 2009), and is integral in promoting children's language development (Lau et al., 2011). In fact, the effects of home literacy activities continue beyond the kindergarten years. Parent involvement in such activities is the basis for future language and literacy (Bennett et al., 2002; Cairney, 2003). Of all the home literacy activities studied, the amount of reading completed at home has the strongest impact on future school success (Moschovaki, 1999). When parents read to their children in the early years, reading outcomes in Grades 1 and 3 (Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002) and Grade 2 (Griffin & Morrison, 1997) were statistically significant.

Parents and Teachers: Learning Expectations for Children in JK

In the current research, both similarities and differences were found in the learning outcomes that parents and teachers expected children to achieve by the end of JK (see Figure 2).

Differences between parents and teachers.

Academics.

Parents in this study reported that they wanted their child to achieve specific academic skills by the end of their time in JK (e.g., identifying shapes, counting to 15, learning the alphabet, printing and recognizing words, sorting and classifying objects). Similar to Chan (2011), some

parents wanted to see measurable learning results with a focus on structure and academics (e.g., learn shapes, numbers, letters, and print name). Parents, more than teachers, felt that these cognitive expectations should be achieved at the end of JK. However, some teachers in this study felt that although measuring learning results were not required by the end of JK, children should at least have an interest in some basic academic skills such as literacy and numeracy, consistent with Grace and Brandt (2006) and Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2008). Thus, it would be beneficial for teachers to inform parents that the level of academic achievement that is being aimed for in JK does not focus on concrete academic learning, but on academic skills that are in development. This difference in attitudes towards academic expectations for JK were also reflected in Chan's (2011) and Knudsen-Lindauer and Harris' (1989) research where parents prioritized academic skills for Kindergarten children. Likewise, the present study found that learning outcomes related to academic skills are more valued by parents than teachers. Consequently, parents should inform teachers about their thoughts on the importance of academics, thus in turn, it would enable teachers to make suggestions for more meaningful cognitive-based activities at home prior to and during JK, for example, shared reading and incidental learning instead of workbooks.

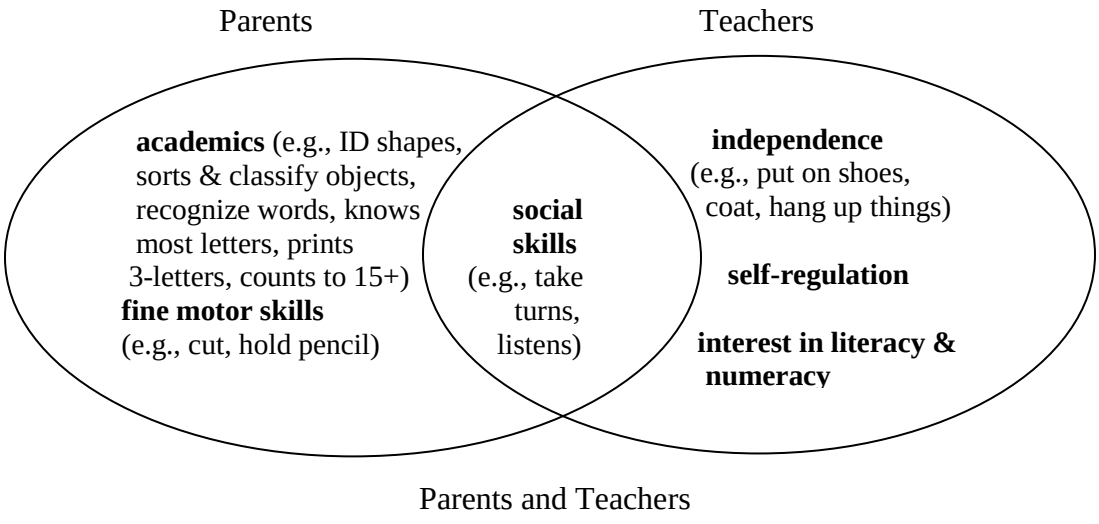

Figure 2. A comparison of parental and teacher expectations of learning by the end of JK.

Interpersonal skills.

Teachers in this study viewed the development of interpersonal skills (i.e., listening, following instructions, and directions), self-help/independence skills, and self-regulation as being more important when compared to parents during the Kindergarten year. Chan (2011), Lin et al. (2003), and Ray and Smith (2010) also found that self-help/independence skills, and self-regulation was more valued by teachers. A comparison of previous studies to the present study found some contradictory results in the literature in regards to parents placing importance on interpersonal, self-help/independence, and self-regulation skills. For example, some studies found that such skills (e.g., self-help/independence) were of more importance to parents during Kindergarten (King & Boardman, 2009; Zhang et al., 2008). This study however, found that self-help/independence skills were not important to the majority of parents during JK, which was similar to Achhpal et al., (2007) and Knudsen-Lindauer and Harris's (1989) research. Overall, teachers may deem these skills as being more important because they are essential for successful interactions in the classroom and lay a foundation for future learning. Parents may not necessarily see the connection between these skills for schooling and other life situations, and perhaps teachers should further clarify why these skills are important to parents in relation to these aspects. It is apparent that further work needs to be completed in regards to parents and teachers equally understanding the value and development of such skills for JK children.

Similarities between parents and teachers.

Social skills.

In the present study, learning outcomes related to social skills was deemed to be important for children to achieve by the end of JK for both parents and teachers. Consistent with Achhpal et al. (2007) and Chan (2011), both survey and interview data seemed to suggest that the majority of

parents believed that social skills were also important learning outcomes of JK. On the other hand, consistent with other studies (i.e., Chan, 2011; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Knudsen-Lindauer & Harris, 1989; Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008; Lee, 2006; Lin et al., 2003; Kowalski et al., 2001; Piotrkowski et al., 2000), teachers in the present study also agreed that the development of social skills were important to achieve.

Survey results showed that there were no significant differences for expectations involving social development between parents and teachers. Furthermore on average, both parents and teachers rated some of these social skills higher than others (e.g., encouraging imaginative play with others and taking turns). These are important expectations for JK as they help foster success in the classroom and provide opportunities for children to practice certain skills (e.g., problem solving), which will be essential for future school success.

Considerations for learning expectations for children in JK.

Throughout this study, it became apparent that teachers and parents have differing and similar views about what should be considered learning outcomes for the end of JK. Overall, for the majority of teachers in this study, they felt that children in JK/SK learn best in a classroom that promotes socialization when instruction within the classroom happens through play-based learning. This was also confirmed by parents when they agreed that social skills were the most important learning expectation that children should achieve by the end of JK. Given that the learning outcomes in FDK seem to focus on social skills and independence by the end of SK, the current study acknowledges that such learning outcomes should be addressed for JK children as well.

Ensuring Success in the Transition to JK: Implications for Practice

One of the goals of this research project was to determine how to facilitate children's transition to JK. During the interview with parents and teachers, questions were asked about

recommendations that would help assist children, parents, and teachers to ensure children have a successful transition into formal schooling. Additional recommendations have evolved from the questionnaire data findings. These recommendations include an explicit establishment of learning outcomes for JK, informing parents prior to, and during, JK entry, as well as recommending transition to school activities, and finally involving parents during their child's JK year.

Establishment of learning outcomes for JK.

Parents and teachers in this study both reported a need for formal JK learning expectations, rather than combined expectations for JK and SK. For example, parents and teachers in this study recommended that social skills and an interest in literacy and numeracy be established as key learning outcomes for JK. Additionally, teachers recommended that JK have a set of expectations focused on developing self-regulation and independence. Teachers in this study found that focusing on all of these skills would ensure success in JK. Social skills should be noted as the top learning outcome for JK as both parents and teachers in this study agreed that such skills were important during a child's time in JK. It is imperative that school boards and the Ministry of Education consult with teachers and parents to determine what learning outcomes are most valued in the JK year. Consultation with parents will ensure that the skills parents most value will be included as learning outcomes by the end of JK. Overall, this study recommends that the FDK curriculum continues to focus on a play-based learning environment, but to split the FDK learning outcomes into two separate grade levels, JK and SK, or to develop a list of expectations for JK students apart from SK, including those that focus on social, self-regulation, and independence skills.

Prior to JK entry: Information to parents.

Transition to school activities.

Transition to school activities provided by teachers and school personnel are essential to ensuring a successful transition to JK (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). However, in this study, similar to McIntyre and colleagues (2007), the majority of parents commented that there was a lack of knowledge about the JK transition and program. They wanted more information about the routines and schedule of the JK/SK day, what their child will be learning, and the types of activities their child will complete within the context of play-based learning. Teachers, on the other hand, reported that information was provided to parents. This divergence of opinion regarding such activities seems to result from the lack of consistency among transition to school practices in each of the schools analyzed. This poses a concern because the school board, specifically the curriculum department, should be ensuring that all schools are following certain "best practices" regarding the transition into JK. These practices include an orientation for parents and children, information about play-based learning, and a list of skills that a child should be able to complete prior to entering JK. Of all the schools in this study, only three transition practices were consistently completed. That is, all schools sent home a board-created booklet entitled "Welcome to Kindergarten", used a staggered entry process in September, and had at least one JK orientation evening where parents were invited to the school to learn more about the JK/SK program prior to the start of JK. The latter strategy is known to support the transition to Kindergarten (e.g., Gill et al., 2006; Grace & Brandt, 2006; Einarsdottir et al., 2008; LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008).

Other strategies suggested by research to be effective in facilitating a smooth transition included making a phone call home to the child (Gill et al, 2006) or parent, visiting the child at home (Graue, 1998), and writing a letter to the child (Einarsdottir et al., 2008; Gill et al., 2006) or parent. All schools were not completing such strategies. These inconsistencies in practice may be a

result of a lack of time among teachers or principals, or a lack of understanding of the transition activities that need to be completed. As such, further research should be conducted to determine the cause of such inconsistencies. The lack of consistency among the schools was a cause for concern. School boards should aim to have certain routines in place that are consistently completed to ensure a successful transition to JK. Such practices should include a brief information package, at least two orientation sessions (one for parents and one for parents and children) prior to beginning JK, a phone call, and interview or meeting with the child by the incoming JK teacher. Such strategies help children to adjust to the classroom environment and improve their social competency in Kindergarten (LoCasale-Crouch et al., 2008). The inconsistencies may explain why parents felt that they were uncertain of what the expectations were in JK before JK entry, especially with regard to the play-based learning curriculum, and why teachers felt that parents also did not understand the expectations surrounding the learning outcomes for JK.

In this study, more information about the play-based learning program should be provided to parents by teachers. This was also one of the findings in Rothlein and Brett's (1987) study. If the information is not provided to the parents in an effective and detailed manner, then it is evident why they have limited understanding as to the purpose of play-based learning. Many parents during the interview process commented they were not provided with enough information about play-based learning prior to their child entering JK. Therefore, teachers are partly responsible for keeping parents uninformed about the benefits of play-based learning. It is apparent that schools need to improve the manner in which they communicate expectations about play-based learning to parents.

Parents want more information about JK and involvement in the process of ensuring a successful JK transition. With this information, more successful transitions to JK may be possible. For example, Pelletier and Brent (2002) established a program where ESL parents and teachers worked together with their children in the school, and with assistance at home. The strategies

observed by parents (e.g., teachers modeling interaction with students or teachers use of positive feedback) in this program allowed children to be better prepared for JK and have future academic success. Although the importance of academic preparation before JK should not be diminished, teachers should encourage parents to focus less academic preparation prior to JK as other types of skills (e.g., independence and self-regulation) are of greater importance. When parents have advanced knowledge of what is expected prior to JK entry, chances of school readiness will improve (Son & Morrison, 2010). Therefore, earlier contact and further communication by teachers (as recommended by the parents in this study) will help to promote a positive transition to the JK classroom.

Recommendation one: An information package.

The school board could mandate that all schools provide a registration package to parents before children enter into JK. This should include information about expectations for JK as parents in this study felt that they did not have enough information. Initially, the early years' curriculum leader at the school board should ensure that this process is completed by all schools and should ensure that the information is disseminated to the principal of each elementary school. The principal should then ensure that this information is distributed to the incoming JK parents. Information that could be distributed to JK parents includes a full registration package with approximately four items in total for each school so that parents are not disappointed with too little information. This package should include: the board's "Welcome to Kindergarten" booklet, "On the Way to JK" pamphlet, the Nipissing Developmental Screen (Nipissing District Developmental Screen Intellectual Property Association, 2000), and information about the JK/SK combined program. Other information may include a resource about play-based learning, an FDK question and answer pamphlet or community resources (e.g., the Early Years' Centres, or the public library).

Information from Early Years' Centres or libraries can provide parents access to free resources and assistance to help their child with the transition to formal schooling (e.g., ability to borrow books or toys, and access to specialized programming or socialization with other children). However, given the sheer number of information pamphlets available, but not being utilized by all schools, schools may elect to only send information requested by parents. This information could include topics that cover the structure of JK, play-based learning, and curriculum outcomes. Based on the findings of the study, parents and teachers recommended to the researcher a list of the top 10 things to ensure a successful JK transition (see Appendix H). This list includes some of the things that a child should be able to do prior to entering JK and should be included with the JK information package. This list, as well as the other materials stated above, should be available in a number of different languages that can be downloaded from the school board website so that principals can tailor their package to specific ethnic populations within their school community.

Recommendation two: Orientation sessions.

Findings from this study suggest parents would benefit from at least two orientation sessions: at least one session may be focused on parents and one focused on the children. A few more may be required depending on the school boundaries and the community to be served. These sessions provide teachers the opportunity to discuss Kindergarten readiness, expectations, and programming to parents, and provide children the opportunity to become familiar with the environment prior to actually attending so a gradual transition can occur (Gill et al., 2006). Additionally, the findings suggest that parents would appreciate an outline of what a typical Kindergarten day looks like and activities that will be completed. Also, teachers can review the top 10 things parents should do before their child enters JK (e.g., recognize their printed name, interact with other children positively, and go to the bathroom independently). Although this study found

that teachers discuss some of the essential skills and activities that parents should complete before children enter school in some elementary schools (e.g., put on coat and shoes, open and close lunch containers and back packs), it may be helpful for parents to have this information provided and reviewed at the orientation session prior to their child starting JK. This would allow parents to increase opportunities for children to prepare for a successful transition to JK.

Recommendation three: Interviews, staggered entry, and home visits.

Following the orientations, and prior to starting school in September, the teacher could call each incoming JK child and parent at home and/or have an interview with the parent in person, to discuss the JK expectations and curriculum that is focused on play-based learning. In this call, teachers should ask information about their home practices to see if they provide more of a focus on cognitive activities. Additionally, asking information about whether the child was in day care or had stay-at-home experience with a parent or caregiver. This strategy will not only determine whether the child has experience with being away from parents, but can also assist in placing the child more appropriately during the staggered entry process. Such strategies will help prepare the child for a smooth transition to Kindergarten (Gill et al., 2006) and provide information to parents about JK programming. Finally, there should be a gradual transition into school where the child attends for a few hours or only a few days a week (Graue, 1998), staggered entry process which is less confusing for parents, and to reinstate home visits by the teacher (Graue, 1998).

Homes informing schools.

In considering social practice research, transition activities that are completed should be relevant and useful in everyday life and must be applied in any given situation or circumstance, no matter the environment or background that it entails (Perry, 2012). Thus, in order to ensure that such transition practices are effective, one needs to go to the source to determine what is most

effective for transitioning to JK. Information or quotes from parents who currently have children in JK could also be used in promotional materials to help future JK parents with the transition process. Additionally, school boards should consider using focus groups to converse with parents to determine what strategies should be used to assist in a successful JK transition. Focus groups include a number of individuals (e.g., JK parents) who are brought together to voice their opinion on a particular topic (i.e., strategies for transitioning to JK). Additionally, parents can be asked to complete a survey about what will help them support children's transition, similar to what was completed in this study. For example, parents can be asked what was completed well, what can be improved on, and what they would recommend as being of benefit for their child's transition. Parents in this study were aware of the developmental capabilities of their children and knew what was best for their children. Thus, their opinions and perspectives about the transition should be valued because they are their child's first teacher (Joe & Davis, 2009; Ming & Powell, 2010) and they know what their child is capable of completing before entering school. This interconnection between parents and teachers is essential as teachers can enhance what is happening at home at school.

During the JK year: Involving parents.

Once in JK, parents should continue to reinforce skills that their children have developed in the JK classroom, such as promoting and encouraging independence skills, at home. This includes dressing and cleaning up after oneself, hanging up their coat, as well as reading. Teachers in this study found that these skills were essential for success in the JK classroom. Furthermore, in this study, teachers encouraged parents to be involved in the JK classroom when possible, as parental involvement in children's learning is strongly related to academic achievement (Edwards et al., 2010). Although parents in this study seem to value academic skills more than teachers, teachers

should respect this and encourage parents to promote the development of such skills in their child. However, teachers might recommend that parents encourage cognitive skills by utilizing incidental learning within the home environment or other places that they may take the child (such as the zoo, museum, park or grocery store) to support child motivation. Encouraging cognitive skills is essential because when parents dedicate increased amounts of time to completing academic activities at home with their child, children tend to be better prepared for school (Lau et al., 2011). This is most likely to occur when children are motivated learners.

Furthermore, teachers should continue to provide opportunities to extend what their students are learning in the classroom to home so that parents can be a part of the learning. This provides parents the opportunity to continue conversations at home about what was completed in the JK classroom. This was accomplished in the present study through the use of weekly newsletters or blogs, which included pictures of children engaging in learning while playing. These pictures can help parents who have difficulty reading English understand the activities being completed in the JK classroom. In order to maintain the constant connection with school, both parents and teachers in this study cited communication as being extremely important. When involving parents in the "exchange of ideas and information", student success is likely to be improved (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002, p. 9). Thus, the use of blogs and newsletters encourage parents to be familiar with what their children were learning throughout the school day and provide them the opportunity to continue these conversations at home about their learning experiences.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

A number of limitations exist within the current study. First and foremost, the survey was based on parental self-report of the frequency and type of early learning activities that were completed. Bias could be found in the impending results with regard to social desirability

(Northrup, Clubine-Ito, Mercier, & Pollard, 2014). That is, a parent could say that they were completing such activities at home, when in fact they were not, as sometimes, busy lives or social situations may render completing early learning activities difficult (e.g., McWayne, et al., 2004). However, many of the items on the questionnaire were ones discussed in the interview and parents were able to qualify many of their statements. Future research could include observations of parents engaged in early learning activities with their child to further inform home to school transitioning for JK students.

Second, the early learning activities and expectations for JK that were found to be prominent in this study were focused primarily on children who were 3-4 years of age. Research typically conducted about the transition to Kindergarten involves children who were five years of age. Recognizing this, it is possible that some of the early learning activities that were included in the questionnaire may not be completed by the parents in this study as their children were not of developmental age to complete the activity (e.g., a 3-year-old may not be able to cut with a pair of scissors, or hold a pencil properly).

Additionally, in the questionnaire, two out of five expectations that differed between parents and teachers were not considered learning outcomes in the FDK document. Despite this, several parents believed that some of these cognitive skills should be completed at the end of JK, such as printing some three-letter words and counting up to 15 or more. It is apparent that parents need to be better informed about the FDK curriculum. This is highlighted by the findings in the present study where parents felt that they were not given enough information about the FDK program. In fact, there are no concrete cognitive outcomes to be achieved by the end of JK; there are only outcomes suggested for SK children's learning as the FDK document includes SK children with JK children in the expectation requirements.

The curriculum expectations for FDK are based on play-based learning environment. Such may limit the generalizations of this study to other Kindergarten parents, teachers, or classrooms. That is, a different perspective about the play-based curriculum may exist and effect expectations of parents and teachers. Therefore, future research should focus on the different curriculum expectations for Kindergarten programs and examine whether differences exist in activities and expectations of parents and teachers in comparison to this study.

Finally, a greater number of teachers should be included in the sample as there were a small number of teachers involved in this study. These teachers were also located in one school board within the province of Ontario. Perhaps differences about the importance of early learning activities or expectations by the end of JK would be found if a greater sample of teachers in diverse settings were to be included in future research.

Conclusion

This research study focused on the similarities and differences between parents' completion of early learning activities and teachers' beliefs about the importance of such activities, as well as parents' and teachers' expectations for JK. Some of the areas of similarities included completing learning activities such as socializing, and being independent and expectations focused on social skills at the end of JK. Areas where divergent views were held included early learning activities and expectations for JK involving the importance of academics and the development of self-regulation.

In this research, parents and teachers had divergent expectations as to the learning outcomes for JK. This specifically includes the development of independence, academics, and self-regulation. Self-regulation and independence skills among children were most essential to teachers for JK learning, whereas parents felt that fine motor skills and academics were more important than these two skills during JK. Given such contradictions in expectations, considerations must be made by

teachers about the differences in parents' beliefs because schools tend to focus on a specific set of ideals for student learning (Edwards et al., 2010).

Teachers commented that children who develop self-regulation skills during JK had a stronger foundation for future school success. Likewise, teachers noted that children who have not yet developed emotional control are more likely to have difficulties both in the classroom and throughout their lifetime. That is, lack of self-regulation impacts a child's attention, such as the ability to listen to directions or a storybook, share with others, problem solve or resolve disputes with other children. All of these activities ultimately support academic achievement (Rhoades, Warren, Domitrovich, & Greenberg, 2011) and teachers should strive to make parents aware of this important connection.

Similarly, socio-emotional skills and independence skills are interconnected (Piotrkowski et al., 2001). Children who are unable to interact well with others or do things on their own may encounter difficulties in the future. Skills such as cooperation, sharing, taking turns, and working in groups are developed in the play-based learning environment. When children are unable to interact effectively with others or have behavioural issues, it impacts not only the environment of the classroom itself, but the learning that can occur in the classroom. Parents need to develop a child's self-regulation ability, and continue to develop children's independence, and social skills at home. Rimm-Kaufman and Wanless (2012) found that the type of feedback parents provide to their children (e.g., opportunities for play, not controlling language) can help support self-regulation. Thus, it is important that teachers demonstrate to parents explicitly why these skills are essential for children to achieve (Edwards et al., 2010). Explicit understanding of what is expected for children entering JK is beneficial to both parties. It is important to recognize the shared responsibilities for teaching such skills.

Children are provided opportunities to acquire skills during their time in JK as the Kindergarten classroom fosters and develops many skills (De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; King & Boardman, 2006). For example, social skills help children have a successful transition to Kindergarten (Mirkil, 2010). Although the classroom promotes the development of such skills, parents should still make an effort to complete a variety of early learning activities (e.g., reading to a child) as prior research has shown early learning activities helps children obtain the numerous academic skills needed for the transition to Kindergarten (Cairney, 2003; Christian et al., 1998; Fails Nelson 2005; Griffin & Morrison, 1997).

This study noted that many parents willingly completed activities at home to prepare their child for JK entry. The activities primarily included encouraging socializing, such as supporting children's interactions with other children, reading to children, encouraging independence and responsibility, and promoting academic skills. However, of these activities, only academics and socialization were of greater importance to parents compared to teachers. On the other hand, teachers felt that encouraging self-regulation, promoting independence, and reading to children were activities of greater importance to complete for children prior to JK. Literacy development can be promoted in many different ways (Lynch, 2008), and such skills can also be achieved through the use of computer technology (i.e., multimodal literacies). Although this study did not question teachers on why technology was less valued than some other early learning activities prior to JK, future research may investigate why teachers were less likely to consider the use of computers as an important activity prior to JK. Limiting expected opportunities that promote literacy or other academic skills through the use of computer technology might prevent children who are engaged in and enjoy typical non-traditional methods from acquiring opportunities to learn important skills (e.g., as compared to reading a book in print) or improve other areas of development as mentioned previously.

Some of the parents in this study were concerned about their child's transition to JK and the subsequent learning because they were not fully informed about the programming or expectations for JK prior to formal school entry. However, once their child entered JK, they began to receive information from schools about their child and the learning that was occurring in the classroom. Although some researchers (e.g., Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002) have found that parents who are disengaged from the school environment could have a negative perception of school and not become involved in their child's schooling, this was not apparent in the current study. Parents in this study continued to be interested in their child's learning as they commented that they were appreciative when teachers provided information about what their children were learning through newsletters and daily blogs. Many parents in this study extended the learning that was occurring at school, into their home, and showed strong interest in their child's schooling, in light of having limited time in some cases. As parent involvement predicts the level of student success (Rogers, 2011), if parents are not involved, it sets up their children to have diminished success in school (Edwards et al., 2010). Despite the positive response about being aware of what their children were learning in the classroom, parents in this study were still unsure of what learning outcomes should be achieved by the end of JK. Therefore, there exists a need for teachers to better inform parents of the overall learning expectations (i.e., social, emotional, and academic) prior to JK so that children can be better prepared for the transition into JK. This study has addressed some of the ways that further communication between parents and teachers can be possible.

Bearing in mind Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, parents, schools, and teachers must work together to ensure that expectations and values of parents and teachers are understood. As this becomes routine, only then can children be adequately prepared for a successful transition to and during JK, especially with the current focus of a play-based curriculum model. I concur with Hoover-Dempsey and Walker (2002) and Pushor (2012) that when schools include

families, children, and the community in the school environment, a positive impact on student achievement is more likely to occur and children will be more likely to achieve success in JK, in school, and beyond. The recommendations outlined in this study should assist both parents and teachers in supporting a smoother home to school transition for JK children.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent for Principals

December 10, 2014

To all Elementary School Principals:

My name is Tiziana Ceccato and since 2001, I have been a Family Studies teacher at [redacted] High School. I have a background in Child Studies at the University of Guelph and am currently completing my Masters of Education at York University in the field of Early Childhood Education. I am completing a study from January to March 2015 to find out more about the expectations of parents and teachers with regards to Junior Kindergarten (JK) and am interested in learning more from JK teachers and parents of JK children. I would greatly appreciate your school's participation to help me to fulfill the requirements for my thesis.

The title of my research project is an Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten Students and Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities

The purpose is to research the differences in expectations that parents and teachers have for junior kindergarten students and to find out more about what parents do and what teachers expect before children enter junior kindergarten.

Upon notice from the board, you are encouraged to ask your JK teachers if they wish to participate in this study. Teachers and JK parents will be asked to complete a short questionnaire on what activities parents have completed with their child prior to JK entry and what they believe a child should be able to do at the completion of JK. This will take approximately 15 minutes. There are no potential risks in completing this questionnaire. Following this questionnaire, teachers and parents will be provided the option to take part in a short semi-structured follow-up interview. Teachers, parents, and the school name will not be used in this study or in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence your relationship with the school board, researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating after consenting, it will not affect your relationship with the school board, researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. All associated data collected will be immediately destroyed if you choose to withdraw.

All information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. You, the school name or parents' names will be kept anonymous and will not be identified in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

The information is collected under the authority of Board Policy [redacted] and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Users of this information will be members of the Board's Research Liaison Committee. The contact person for inquiries concerning this information is the Superintendent responsible for this policy.

Teachers will be asked to distribute to parents a consent form and questionnaire via the JK student's communication bag. Once returned, each will be assigned a corresponding number. The consent form will be separated from the questionnaire and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet. Teachers will be asked to complete a questionnaire and upon return, it will also be assigned a number. Parents and teachers will only be contacted following the questionnaire if they consented to participate in an interview. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this project will have access to the questionnaires, interview responses, transcriptions or consent forms, all of which will be shredded and deleted from disk two years after the completion of the research.

The Research Liaison Committee of the [redacted] has given permission for this study to be carried out at your school. This research has also been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

The research will be presented in a final paper as part of my thesis or in other papers and/or publications presented in other research contexts. I will use a descriptive analysis to examine the similarities and differences between teachers and parents' expectations and beliefs and will provide recommendations for best practices to assist children in the transition to Junior Kindergarten. I can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

If you have any questions about this research project, the processes, or your rights as a participant, please contact:

(1) Tiziana Ceccato, Graduate Student & Researcher, York University:
<[redacted]> or <[redacted]>
(2) [redacted], Associate Professor, York University: [redacted] or
<[redacted]>

With sincere thanks,
[redacted]

Tiziana Ceccato, OCT
Family Studies Teacher, [redacted]
M.Ed. Candidate, Early Childhood Education, York University

Please complete the following consent form on the following page, detach it and return it to the researcher as soon as possible.

I have read the request for participation in *An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten & Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities* project. I hereby give permission for my school to participate in this project as a part of a study of parent and teacher expectations being completed by Tiziana Ceccato at York University for her M.Ed. program, which will be conducted in the [redacted]. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Name of Principal (please print):_____

Name of School (please print):_____

_____ _____
Signature of Principal Date

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix B: Letter of Consent for Teachers

December 10, 2014

Dear JK Teacher:

My name is Tiziana Ceccato and since 2001, I have been a Family Studies teacher at [redacted] High School. I have a background in Child Studies at the University of Guelph and am currently completing my Masters of Education at York University in the field of Early Childhood Education. I am completing a study from January to March 2015 to find out more about the expectations of parents and teachers with regards to Junior Kindergarten (JK) and am interested in learning more from JK teachers and parents of JK children. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping me to fulfill the requirements for my thesis.

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten Students and Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities

PURPOSE:

To research the differences in expectations that parents and teachers have for junior kindergarten students and to find out more about what parents do and what teachers expect before children enter junior kindergarten.

YOUR ROLE:

Is to help distribute and collect questionnaires from parents via the JK students' school bag and to complete a short questionnaire at your convenience that will take approximately 15 minutes. There are no potential risks in completing this questionnaire. Following this questionnaire, you have the option to take part in a short 20-minute semi-structured follow-up interview. No names will be used in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

PARTICIPATION

This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence your relationship with the school or school board, researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating after consenting, it will not affect your relationship with the school or school board, the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. All associated data collected will be immediately destroyed if you choose to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. You or the school name will be kept anonymous and will not be identified in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

The information is collected under the authority of Board Policy [redacted] and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Users of this information will be members of the Board's Research Liaison Committee. The contact person for inquiries concerning this information is the Superintendent responsible for this policy.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES:

Once you have returned the consent form and questionnaire together in the sealed envelope, each will be assigned a corresponding number. The consent form will be separated from your questionnaire and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet. Teachers will only be contacted following the questionnaire if they consented to participate in an interview. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this project will have access to the questionnaires, interview responses, transcriptions or consent forms, all of which will be shredded and deleted from disk two years after the completion of the research.

The Research Liaison Committee of the [redacted] has given permission for this study to be carried out at your school. This research has also been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

The research will be presented in a final paper as part of my thesis or in other papers and/or publications presented in other research contexts. I will use a descriptive analysis to examine the similarities and differences between teachers and parents' expectations and beliefs and will provide recommendations for best practices to assist children in the transition to Junior Kindergarten. I can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

If you have any questions about this research project, the processes, or your rights as a participant, please contact:

(1) Tiziana Ceccato, Graduate Student & Researcher, York University: <[redacted]> or <[redacted]>

(2) [redacted], Associate Professor, York University: [redacted] or <[redacted]>

With sincere thanks,

[redacted]

Tiziana Ceccato, OCT
Family Studies Teacher, [redacted]
M.Ed. Candidate, Early Childhood Education, York University

Please complete the following consent form on the following page, detach it and return to the researcher as soon as possible.

I have read the request for participation in *An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten & Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities* project. I hereby give permission for my participation in completing a questionnaire for this project as a part of a study of parent and teacher expectations being completed by Tiziana Ceccato at York University for her M.Ed. program, which will be conducted in the [redacted]. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Name of Teacher (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature of Teacher Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix C: Letter of Consent for Parents

January 12, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians:

My name is Tiziana Ceccato and since 2001, I have been a Family Studies teacher at [redacted] High School. I have a background in Child Studies at the University of Guelph and am currently completing my Masters of Education at York University in the field of Early Childhood Education. I am completing a study from January to March 2015 to find out more about the expectations of parents and teachers with regards to Junior Kindergarten (JK) and am interested in learning more from JK teachers and parents of JK children. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping me to fulfill the requirements for my thesis.

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten Students and Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities

PURPOSE:

To research the differences in expectations that parents and teachers have for junior kindergarten students and to find out more about what parents do and what teachers expect before children enter junior kindergarten.

YOUR ROLE:

To complete a short questionnaire at home that is attached. It will take about 15 minutes. There are no anticipated risks in completing this questionnaire. There is an option to further participate in this study by engaging in a follow-up interview. No names will be used in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study. Your child will not be participating in this study.

PARTICIPATION

This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence your relationship with the school or school board, researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating after consenting, it will not affect your relationship with the school or school board, researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. All associated data collected will be immediately destroyed if you choose to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. You and the school name will be kept anonymous and will not be identified in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

The information is collected under the authority of Board Policy [redacted] and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Users of this information will be

members of the Board's Research Liaison Committee. The contact person for inquiries concerning this information is the Superintendent responsible for this policy.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES:

Once you have returned the consent form *and* questionnaire together in the sealed envelope provided, each will be assigned a corresponding number. The consent form will be separated from your questionnaire and stored securely in a locked filing cabinet. Parents will only be contacted following the questionnaire if they consented to participate in an interview. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this project will have access to the questionnaires, interview responses, transcriptions and consent forms, all of which will be shredded and deleted from disk two years after the completion of the research.

The Research Liaison Committee of the [redacted] has given permission for this study to be carried out at your child's school. This research has also been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca.

The research will be presented in a final paper as part of my thesis or in other papers and/or publications presented in other research contexts. I will use a descriptive analysis to examine the similarities and differences between teachers and parents' expectations and beliefs and will provide recommendations for best practices to assist children in the transition to Junior Kindergarten. I can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

If you have any questions about this research project, the processes, or your rights as a participant, please contact any of the following persons:

(1) Tiziana Ceccato, Graduate Student & Researcher, York University: <[redacted]>or <[redacted]>

(2) [redacted], Associate Professor, York University: [redacted] or <[redacted]>

With sincere thanks,

[redacted]

Tiziana Ceccato, OCT
Family Studies Teacher, [redacted]
M.Ed. Candidate, Early Childhood Education, York University

Please complete the consent form on the following page, detach it and **place with the questionnaire in the provided envelope addressed to the researcher**. Please seal the envelope to maintain your confidentiality and drop it off at your child's JK classroom on or before **Monday January 19th**. If you prefer, you may also return it in your child's school bag. I will collect parents' questionnaires at that time.

I have read the request for participation in *An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten & Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities* project. I hereby give permission to participate in completing a questionnaire for this project as part of a study of parent and teacher expectations being completed by Tiziana Ceccato at York University as part of her M.Ed. program, which will be conducted in the [redacted]. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Age of your child: _____ years _____months

Name of Parent (please print):_____

_____ _____

Signature of Parent Date

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix D: Parental Involvement in Early Learning Activities Questionnaire

Parental Involvement in Early Learning Activities Questionnaire

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in my study. The primary caregiver of the child should complete this 15-minute survey. No names will be used in any reporting. There is no right or wrong answer.

Please make sure the **last page of your consent form is returned with this survey otherwise your survey cannot be included as part of the results**. Please place your survey and consent form in the envelope provided, seal the envelope, and return it to the classroom teacher **on or before January 19, 2015**.

Part A: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability using the following scale:

Before my child began school, I…

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neither Agree or Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
1. Spent time talking with him/her about what they did during the day.....	1	2	3	4	5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

2. Engaged in make-believe play.....	1	2	3	4	5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

3. Encouraged make-believe play with other children (including siblings).....	1	2	3	4	5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

4. Asked him/her to talk about drawings or pictures he/she sees in books.....	1	2	3	4	5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

5. Encouraged interaction with other children….	1	2	3	4	5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

6. Encouraged him/her to develop responsibility (e.g. care for pet, complete chores, clean up toys): 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

7. Encourage my child to use activity/work books (e.g. learning letters, numbers, words)..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

8. Encouraged him/her to share their belongings with other children..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

9. Taught him/her how to print their name.....1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

10. Encouraged the use of cutting & pasting with arts & crafts materials.....1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

11. Taught him/her how to print several letters of the alphabet..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

12. Encouraged my child to pay attention while a storybook is being read..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

13. Encourage my child's independence (e.g. put on own shoes, coat, hang up things) 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

14. Spent time teaching him/her to count up to 15 or more 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

15. Used cards/flash cards to play letter and word games..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

16. Read story books to him/her..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

17. Helped my child use computer technology (e.g. iPad or computer)..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

18. Encouraged my child to play with puzzles at home..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

19. Encouraged my child to build objects with Lego, blocks or other materials 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

20. Used cards/flash cards to play number games..... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

21. Engaged in imaginative play outdoors (e.g. slide, swing, tricycle, balls, sand toys).... 1 2 3 4 5

If you have answered Strongly Agree (1) or Agree (2), how often might you engage in this activity?
Daily Weekly Monthly Few times/year Once a year

What is the single most important thing that you have completed to help prepare your child for JK?

_____

_____

Please feel free to add any further comments or explanation for any of your answers from the previous pages:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part B: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability using the following scale:

By the end of JK, I expect my child will be able to....

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neither Agree or Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
1. Interact well with his/her peers.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Identify common shapes (e.g. square, circle, rectangle).....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Follow basic directions and instructions	1	2	3	4	5
4. Count up to 15 or more.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do simple fine motor tasks (e.g. tie shoes, cut on a straight line with scissors, hold pencil).....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Read a simple picture book.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. Engage in imaginative play with other kids…	1	2	3	4	5
8. Print their name.....	1	2	3	4	5

9. Be able to say a complete sentence.....	1	2	3	4	5
10. Share with other children.....	1	2	3	4	5
11. Print some 3-letter words.....	1	2	3	4	5
12. Know most letters of the alphabet	1	2	3	4	5
13. Be able to recognize simple words.....	1	2	3	4	5
14. Develop sense of responsibility/self-control…	1	2	3	4	5
15. Follow three-step directions (e.g. Please put your coat, boots and mittens away).....	1	2	3	4	5
16. Be willing to try new things independently.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Orally retell simple events/stories in proper sequence/order 1		2	3	4	5
18. Take turns 1		2	3	4	5
19. Understand the process of reading, holding a book and following text 1		2	3	4	5
20. Listen to a storybook that is being shared.....1		2	3	4	5
21. Sort and classify objects (e.g. collect the red beads, which animals have 2 legs).....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Understand concepts of patterning (i.e. the order in which a series of things occurs).....	1	2	3	4	5

What is the single most important thing that you expect your child to learn in JK?

_____

_____

Please feel free to add any further comments or explanation for any of your answers from the previous pages:

_____

_____

_____

Part C: Here are some questions about you, your family background and your child who is currently in JK. These questions will support the writing of my study. Again, **no names will be used in this study**. Please check (✓) the box that best describes your answer to the question.

1. Your gender: □ Male □ Female □ Other

2. Your age:
□ Under 20 □ 20-25 □ 26-30 □ 31-35 □ 35-40 □41-45 □ 46-50 □ 50+

3. Is this child the first child to enter kindergarten? □ Yes □ No

4. What is the highest level of schooling you have completed:
□ some elementary/primary school (up until Grade 8)
□ elementary school (Grade 8)
□ some high school
□ high school (Grade 12)
□ some college
□ college diploma
□ vocational training
□ some university
□ university degree
□ Masters/PhD/MD

5. Please provide an approximation of your annual income:
□ Below $40,000
□ $40,000-$69,999
□ $70,000-$99,999
□ $100,000-$119,999
□ $120,000-$139,999
□ $140,000-$159,999
□ $160,000+

May I contact you in the future for a short follow-up interview? □ Yes □ No

Phone Number: _____ Best time to contact: _____

Your phone number will be kept confidential and you will remain anonymous to the fullest extent possible. No names will be used in my thesis research. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this study.

Appendix E: Teacher Rating of Parental Involvement in Early Learning Activities Questionnaire

Teacher Rating of Parental Involvement in Early Learning Activities Questionnaire

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in my research project. No names will be used when reporting these results. This questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes.

In filling out this survey, you will help me to better understand what the expectations are for children who are in Junior Kindergarten, which will support my completion of my M.Ed. thesis in Early Childhood Education.

Part A: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability using the following scale:

In preparation for Junior Kindergarten, parents should:

	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neither Agree or Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
1. Spend time talking with their child about what they did during the day.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Engage in make-believe play with their child…	1	2	3	4	5
3. Encourage make-believe play with other children (including siblings).....	1	2	3	4	5
4. Ask their child to talk about drawings or pictures he/she sees in books.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Encourage interaction with other children….....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Encourage their child to develop responsibility (e.g. care for pet, complete chores, clean up toys)….	1	2	3	4	5
7. Encourage their child to use activity/work books (e.g. learning letters, numbers, words).....	1	2	3	4	5
8. Teach their child to share their belongings with other children.....	1	2	3	4	5
9. Teach their child how to print their name.....	1	2	3	4	5
10. Encourage the use of cutting & pasting with arts & crafts materials.....	1	2	3	4	5

11. Teach their child how to print several letters of the alphabet.....	1	2	3	4	5
12. Encourage their child to pay attention while a storybook is being read.....	1	2	3	4	5
13. Encourage their child's independence (e.g. put on own shoes, coat, hang up things)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Spend time teaching their child to count up to 15 or more	1	2	3	4	5
15. Use cards/flash cards to play letter and word games…….....	1	2	3	4	5
16. Read story books to him/her.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Provide access to computer technology (e.g. iPad or computer).....	1	2	3	4	5
18. Encourage their child to play with puzzles at home.....	1	2	3	4	5
19. Encouraged their child to build objects with Lego, blocks or other materials	1	2	3	4	5
20. Used cards/flash cards to play number games.....	1	2	3	4	5
21. Engage in imaginative play outdoors (e.g. slide, swing, tricycle, balls, sand toys)……	1	2	3	4	5

What is the single most important thing that you believe a parent should complete to help prepare their child for JK?

_____

_____

Please feel free to add any further comments or explanation for any of your answers from the previous pages:

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Part B: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability using the following scale:

By the end of JK, I expect the students in my class will be able to....

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Interact well with his/her peers.....	1	2	3	4	5
2. Identify common shapes (e.g. square, circle, rectangle).....	1	2	3	4	5
3. Follow basic directions and instructions	1	2	3	4	5
4. Count up to 15 or more.....	1	2	3	4	5
5. Do simple fine motor tasks (e.g. tie shoes, cut on a straight line with scissors, hold pencil).....	1	2	3	4	5
6. Read a simple picture book.....	1	2	3	4	5
7. Engage in imaginative play with other kids…	1	2	3	4	5
8. Print their name.....	1	2	3	4	5
9. Be able to say a complete sentence.....	1	2	3	4	5
10. Share with other children.....	1	2	3	4	5
11. Print some 3-letter words.....	1	2	3	4	5
12. Know most letters of the alphabet	1	2	3	4	5
13. Be able to recognize simple words.....	1	2	3	4	5
14. Develop sense of responsibility/self-control…	1	2	3	4	5
15. Follow three-step directions (e.g. Please					

put your coat, boots and mittens away).....	1	2	3	4	5
16. Be willing to try new things independently.....	1	2	3	4	5
17. Orally retell simple events/stories in proper sequence/order	1	2	3	4	5
18. Take turns	1	2	3	4	5
19. Understand the process of reading, holding a book and following text	1	2	3	4	5
20. Listen to a storybook that is being shared.....	1	2	3	4	5
21. Sort and classify objects (e.g. collect the red beads, which animals have 2 legs).....	1	2	3	4	5
22. Understand concepts of patterning (i.e. the order in which a series of things occurs).....	1	2	3	4	5

Please feel free to add any further comments or explanation for any of your answers from the previous pages:

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Part C: Below are some questions about you and your educational background which will allow me to compare your answers to other teachers participating in this project.

Unless otherwise mentioned, check (✓) the box that best describes your answer to the question.

1. Your gender: □ Male □ Female □ Other

2. What is the highest degree you have obtained?

3. What is your major and/or minor? (E.g. Major: Science, Minor: English)

4. How many years have you been teaching?

5. How many years have you been teaching JK/SK?

May I contact you in the future for a short follow-up interview? □ Yes □ No

Email **or** Phone Number: _____ Best time to contact: _____

Your phone number will be kept confidential and you will remain anonymous to the fullest extent possible. No names will be used in my thesis research. Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this study.

Appendix F: Interview Questions for Parents

1. What are your greatest hopes for your child?

2. What role does school play in the realization of these hopes?

3. Why did you choose to send your child to Junior Kindergarten?

4. What are some of the things you might have done, if any, to prepare your child for kindergarten entry?

5. Did you have any concerns about your child prior to entering JK? If so, what were they?

6. What do you think parents should be/can be doing to help their child with the transition in Junior Kindergarten? Why?

7. What are the top three skills that you believe your child needs to gain during their time in Junior Kindergarten? Why?

8. Do you think that children's engagement in play is important for learning in Junior Kindergarten? Why or Why not?

9. Do you think parents and teachers have the same expectations for Junior Kindergarten? Why or Why not?

10. What are activities or information that teachers can provide to parents about children's entry into Junior Kindergarten?

11. What suggestions might you have for teachers to better inform parents about expectations for Junior Kindergarten?

Appendix G: Interview Questions for Teachers

1. If there is one thing you would hope JK students will be able to accomplish by the end of the year, what would it be?

2. If you were to choose three main learning skills that you believe children need to gain by the end of Junior Kindergarten what would these be? Please explain your reasons for choosing these skills.

3. Given that play is advocated in the new curriculum, do you think it helps students acquire the skills previously identified? Please elaborate.

b. Do you think parents understand why play is advocated for learning in Junior Kindergarten? Why or why not?

4. Are there things you or the school does to support children's transition to schooling? If so, what would these be? (e.g., mention information to parents?)

b. Are there other things you think schools could be doing? (e.g., if there was more time?)

5. Do you think parents and teachers have the same expectations for Junior Kindergarten? Why or Why not?

6. What do you think parents should be/can be doing to help their child succeed in Junior Kindergarten? Why?

Appendix H: Interview Consent Form for Parents

March 6, 2015

Dear Parent:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this follow-up interview to help me find out more about the expectations of parents and teachers with regards to Junior Kindergarten (JK) for my M.Ed. thesis at York University in Early Childhood Education.

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten Students and Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities

PURPOSE:

To further understand the differences in expectations that parents and teachers have for junior kindergarten students and to find out more about what parents do and what teachers expect before children enter junior kindergarten.

YOUR ROLE:

To answer questions in a semi-structured interview that will take approximately 40 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded. There are no potential risks in answering these questions as they relate to what parents do prior to junior kindergarten entry and what they believe their children should be able to accomplish at the end of junior kindergarten. No names will be used in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

PARTICIPATION

This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence your relationship with the school or school board, researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating after consenting, it will not affect your relationship with the school or school board, the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. All associated data collected will be immediately destroyed if you choose to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. You or the school name will be kept anonymous and will not be identified in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES:

Following your interview, the researcher will transcribe your responses. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this project will have access to your interview responses, transcriptions and consent form, all of which will be shredded and deleted from disk two years after the completion of the research.

The Research Liaison Committee of the [redacted] has given permission for this study to be carried out at your school. This research has also been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca.

The research will be presented in a final paper as part of my thesis or in other papers and/or publications presented in other research contexts. I will use a descriptive analysis to examine the similarities and differences between teachers and parents' expectations and beliefs and will provide recommendations for best practices to assist children in the transition to junior kindergarten. I can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

If you have any questions about this research project, the processes, or your rights as a participant, please contact:

(1) Tiziana Ceccato, Graduate Student & Researcher: York University <[redacted]> or <[redacted]>
(2) [redacted], Associate Professor, York University: [redacted] or <[redacted]>

Thank you for agreeing to complete this interview and for your participation in this project.

Consent:

I, _____, consent to participate in the interview for the study *An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten & Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities* conducted by Tiziana Ceccato. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement and my signature is confirmation of my consent. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix I: Interview Consent Form for Teachers

March 6, 2015

Dear JK Teacher:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this follow-up interview to help me find out more about the expectations of parents and teachers with regards to Junior Kindergarten (JK) for my M.Ed. thesis at York University in Early Childhood Education.

TITLE OF RESEARCH PROJECT:

An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten Students and Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities

PURPOSE:

To further understand the differences in expectations that parents and teachers have for junior kindergarten students and to find out more about what parents do and what teachers expect before children enter junior kindergarten.

YOUR ROLE:

To answer questions in a semi-structured interview that will take approximately 20 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded. There are no potential risks in answering these questions as they relate to what teachers believe parents should do prior to junior kindergarten entry and what they believe their students should be able to accomplish at the end of junior kindergarten. No names will be used in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

PARTICIPATION

This study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer or to refuse to answer particular questions will not influence your relationship with the school or school board, researchers or with staff of York University either now or in the future.

If you decide to stop participating after consenting, it will not affect your relationship with the school or school board, the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. All associated data collected will be immediately destroyed if you choose to withdraw.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information collected will be kept confidential to the fullest extent possible by law. You or the school name will be kept anonymous and will not be identified in any reporting of the data findings collected in this study.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES:

Following your interview, the researcher will transcribe your responses. Only the researcher and the supervisor of this project will have access to your interview responses, transcriptions and consent form, all of which will be shredded and deleted from disk two years after the completion of the research.

The Research Liaison Committee of the [redacted] has given permission for this study to be carried out at your school. This research has also been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board, and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca

The research will be presented in a final paper as part of my thesis or in other papers and/or publications presented in other research contexts. I will use a descriptive analysis to examine the similarities and differences between teachers and parents' expectations and beliefs and will provide recommendations for best practices to assist children in the transition to junior kindergarten. I can send you a copy of the final report if you wish.

If you have any questions about this research project, the processes, or your rights as a participant, please contact:

(1) Tiziana Ceccato, Graduate Student & Researcher: York University: <[redacted]> or <[redacted]>
(2) [redacted], Associate Professor, York University: [redacted] or <[redacted]>

Thank you for agreeing to complete this interview and for your participation in this project.

Consent:

I, _____, consent to participate in the interview for the study *An Examination of Parents' and Teachers' Expectations and Behaviours for Junior Kindergarten & Parents' Engagement in Early Learning Activities* conducted by Tiziana Ceccato. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement and my signature is confirmation of my consent. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Researcher Date

Appendix J: Top 10 Tips for a Successful JK Transition

Top 10 Tips for Parents to Help Ensure a Successful JK Transition for their Child

According to a recent JK study (Ceccato, 2016), many things can be completed to help your child transition into JK and to help prepare your child prior to the start of school! This came from the interviews and questionnaires with teachers and parents.

1. Read to your child. This includes finger pointing and talk about what you've read! This can be from newspaper flyers, cereal boxes or books. Books can also be borrowed from the library for free! This can be in your own native language or English!

2. Talk to your children! Ask them about how they feel, what are they doing, what they are colouring. Consider questions that go beyond what they may be doing (E.g. What did you draw? *A dog.* What sound does a dog make? What colour is the dog?)

3. Encourage incidental learning with your child: Things that are outdoors and things found in the environment such as letters, colours, shapes, & numbers in signs, grocery stores, flyers, cereal boxes and food labels (e.g. How many peas are there on your plate? What letter does STOP start with? What sound does the letter make?)

4. Take them to the park, museums, the zoo, camping, church, festivals, Early Years Centres and library programming to interact with other children and new experiences with different cultures.

5. Display your child's name at home, either on their bedroom door, their coat hook or toy box. This will help them recognize their name when they are in the JK classroom.

6. Provide them the opportunity to be creative and foster printing by having paper, scissors, pencils, crayons, and craft materials (e.g. feathers, yarn, pipe cleaners) readily available.

7. Encourage your child to be responsible! Have them clean up after themselves, take care of pets, hang up their coat, and put away their toys.

8. Encourage their independence by allowing them to dress themselves, open and close lunch containers, and go to the bathroom during times when you are not rushing to go to an appointment.

9. Encourage computer technology and screen time at pre-school age. Focus on educational games or shows and always supervise opportunities and talk to them about what they've watched.

10. Encourage your child to participate in organized sports or physical activities, such as soccer, basketball, or playing at the park to develop large motor skills and socialization with other children.

NOTE: It is helpful for your child to be able to do these things, but development happens individually for each child. If your child becomes frustrated or is not developmentally ready for these tasks, then be patient and try again in another week or two.